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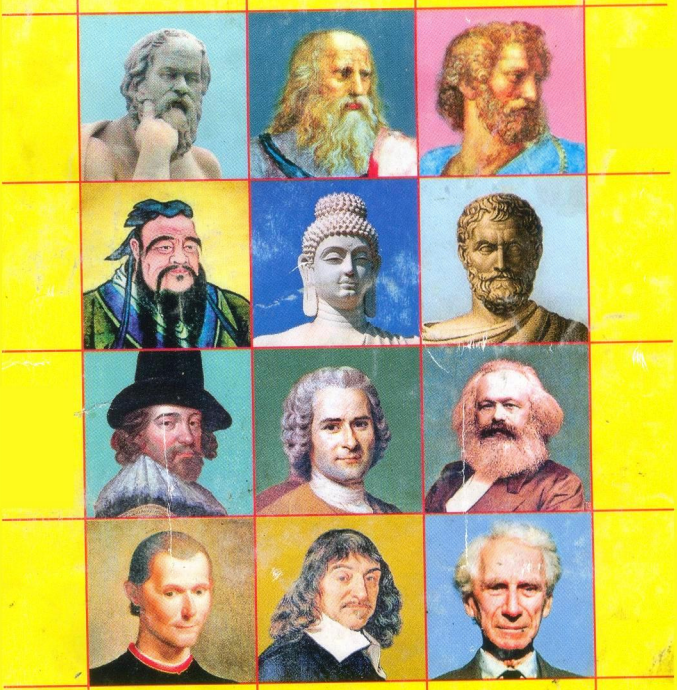

GREAT THINKERS

WHO SHAPED OUR CIVILIZATION

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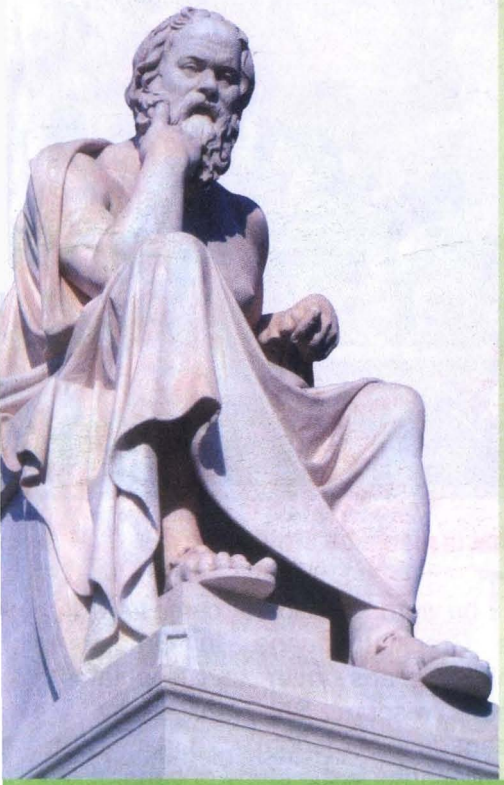
June 2014 • Volume: 8 • No: 6
FROM THE HOUSE OF MAGIC POT, THE WEEK, MANORAMA YEARBOOK, VANITHA & THE MALAYALA MANORAMA DAILY



Story of Thinking

Philosophy is the quest for truth, just like science is. But, its approach is different, and so are its contributions.

Philosophy has not built any bridges, but has shown mankind the pathway. It has not invented a bulb, but has brought light to the world. It has not erected any nuclear power plants, but has energized human minds. That's philosophy, the branch of knowledge that considers questions above answers. Because, it is the question that leads and the answer just follows.

This issue of Tell Me Why tells you about great thinkers and their contributions.

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Fax: ++91- 481 - 2564393
E mail: subscription@mmp.in
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NEW DELHI: Malayala Manorama Co. Ltd.,
Andhra Vanitha Mandali Building,
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Phone: 011- 23379718, 23379719, 23379720

MUMBAI: Malayala Manorama,
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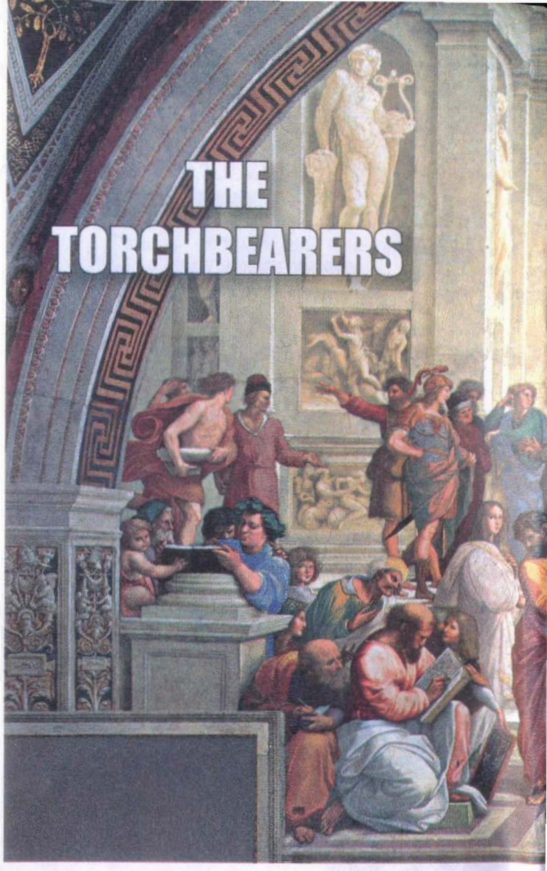


What is meant by 'Philosophy'?

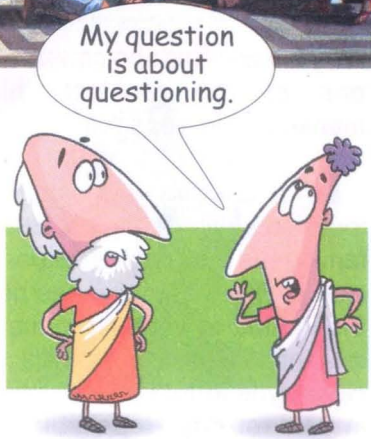
The word 'philosophy' came from the Greek language. In Greek, 'philos' means 'lover' and 'sophia' means 'wisdom'. So, 'philosophy' means 'love of wisdom'.

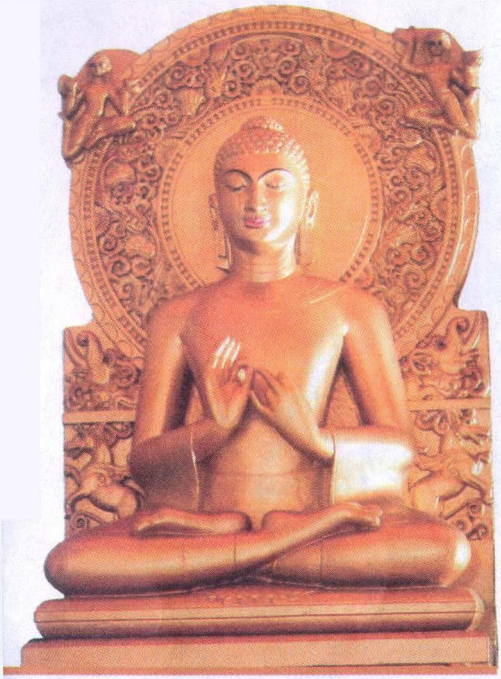
Philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems. Philosophical problems deal with reality,

'The School of Athens'
Raphael's Famous Painting

existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind and language. Some philosophical questions are exciting, puzzling and important to mankind.

Our fundamental beliefs can be challenged by the questions of philosophy.





Lord Buddha

Why is Lord Buddha considered as one of the greatest thinkers mankind has ever seen?

Lord Buddha was a royal who founded a world religion. Buddha's family was the princely leader of the clan of Shakhyas. He was born as Siddhartha at Lumbini in the Terai lowlands, near the foothills of the Himalayas in 563 BC. Lumbini lies in present day Nepal. Siddhartha was married at the age of sixteen and had a son named Rahula.

The sight of human suffering moved Siddhartha. He had a burning wish to find a remedy for it. At the age of twenty nine, Siddhartha left his sleeping wife and son to search for spiritual understanding.

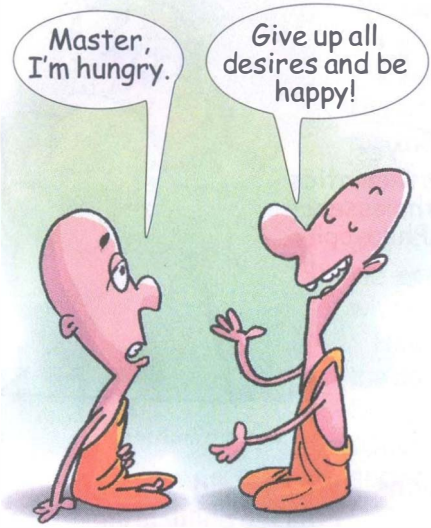
Siddhartha became enlightened at the age of thirty five. Then he gave his first important sermon.

Lord Buddha preached in the villages of ancient India, and passed away in 483 BC.

What were the main teachings of Lord Buddha?

The essence of Buddha's teachings is found in the four noble truths.

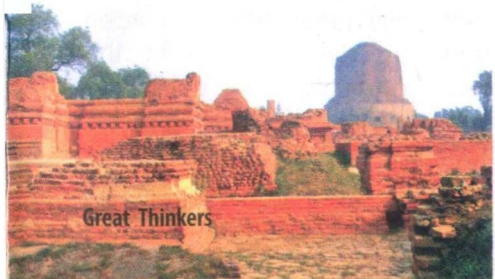
He taught about the four truths in his first Sermon. The first truth asks us to face the reality of human suffering.



The second truth says that all suffering is the result of desire which cannot be permanently satisfied. The third truth reveals that there is a cure for our sufferings.

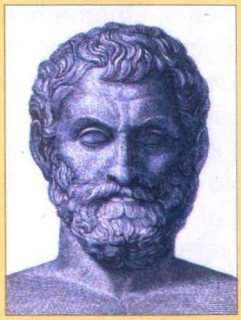
The fourth truth details how it is effected or the course of treatment.

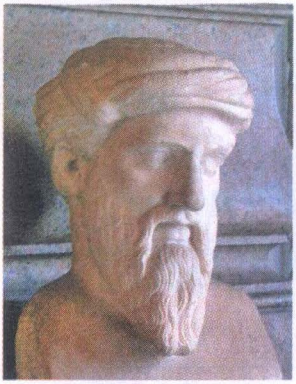
Sarnath- Venue of Buddha's first Sermon



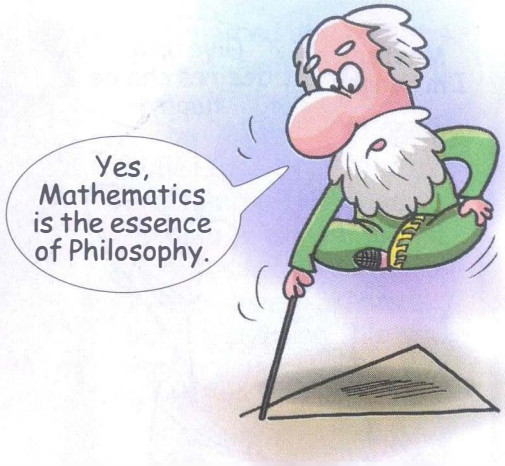
Thales of Miletus

Thales is generally regarded as the first philosopher of the West, and the father of philosophy. He was born in 585 BC. Thales and his followers were the first to search for naturalistic explanations for unusual happenings.





Pythagoras



What were the major contributions of Pythagoras?

Pythagoras, who was born in 570 BC in the Greek island of Samos, contributed greatly to mathematics. He applied mathematics to philosophy and science. His idea that the universe can be explained in mathematical terms was original. It proved to be fruitful in the development of science.

Pythagoras did not make his teachings public. His teachings became known only due to the efforts of his followers. Pythagoras is the forefather of the tradition in Western philosophy which continued into eighteenth century rationalism. He passed away in 495 BC.

Why did Confucius criticise political life?

During the time of Confucius, values were not given due importance in Chinese politics. Confucius criticised politics without values. He suggested that the only remedy was a return to the values of the past. So, he taught ancient classical texts. Later, he joined the local government as the Minister of Justice. His ideas were recorded by his disciples in the Analects- Lun-Yu, for the benefit of future generations.

Confucius

The great Chinese philosopher, Confucius, was born in an aristocratic family in 551 BC. He lived and taught in the province of Lu in China.

The disciples of Confucius continued his school. Mencius and Xunzi are the best known of his later followers.

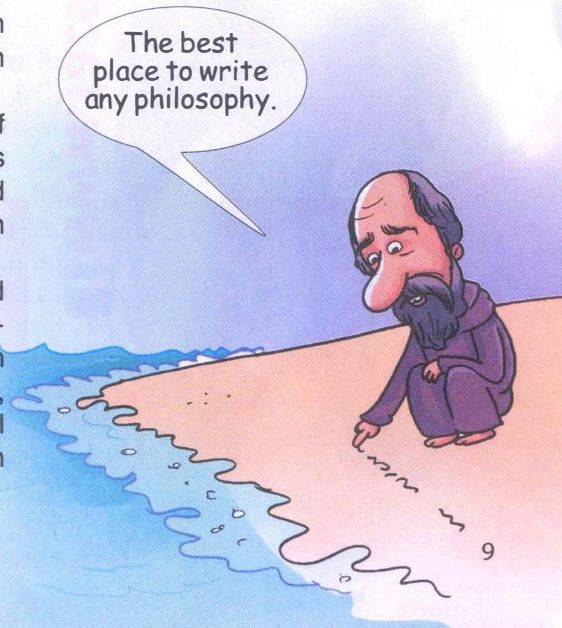
Confucius passed away in 479 BC. Confucianism first flourished in China's classical age, and became the official philosophy of the Han Dynasty in 140 BC.

Who was Heraclitus?

Heraclitus was a Greek thinker. His writings are now lost. Fortunately, his thoughts survive in the works of other authors.

Heraclitus was a critic of the philosophers of Miletus and the great poets. He even said that Homer should be whipped.

Heraclitus was born in Ephesus, on the coast of present day Turkey in 500 BC. Diogenes Laertius, a later philosopher, stated that Heraclitus found society too corrupt for him. So, Heraclitus went to live in the mountains.



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Eating 'Ancestors'

Pythagoras believed that animals may have the transmigrated souls of human ancestors. Therefore, he said that eating animal products was cannibalism. Cannibalism is the act of one human being eating another.

What was the significance of the epic poem 'On Nature'?

'On Nature' is a poem written by the Greek philosopher Parmenides. He laid down his arguments in this poem.

Parmenides was born in Elea around 515 BC. According to Plato, Parmenides visited Athens at the age of sixty five. There, he met the young Socrates. Parmenides was likely to be familiar with the thoughts of Heraclitus, Pythagoras and the Milesians. Parmenides founded the Eleatic School.

Parmenides

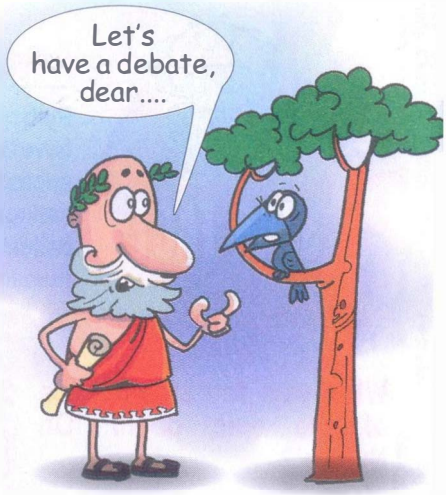
Why is Zeno known as the father of the dialectic?

Aristotle called Zeno 'the inventor of the dialectic'. Dialectics is a way of discovering what is true by considering opposite theories.

Zeno was a Greek philosopher. Born around 450 BC, Zeno went on to become a leading member of the Eleatic School of philosophers, which was founded by Parmenides.

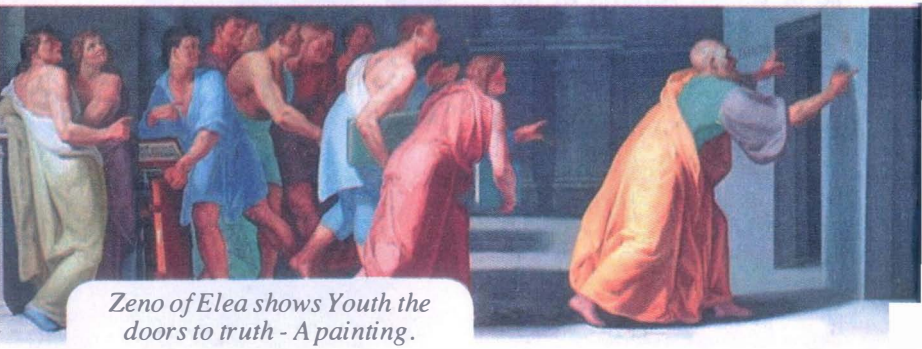
Zeno is famous for his paradoxes. A paradox is a situation or statement which is difficult to understand, for it contains two opposite facts or characteristics.

We come to know of Zeno mostly through Plato's dialogues. Plato says that



Zeno aged around 40, journeyed with Parmenides to Athens.

According to Plato, Zeno collected his arguments in a book, which was lost. Zeno's paradoxes of motion became known through the works of Aristotle.



Zeno of Elea shows Youth the doors to truth - A painting.

A Famous Painting 'The Death of Socrates'

Atomists

Democritus and Leucippus were Greek thinkers who lived around 400 BC. They teamed up to found Atomism. Atomists theorised that nature is made of two basic particles – atom and void.

Why is Socrates known as the greatest thinker of ancient times?

Socrates wrote nothing, but his thoughts live on. Today, Socrates is regarded as one of the greatest of the ancient philosophers. His dialogues were written by his faithful student Plato. Plato himself was a great philosopher.

Socrates was born in 469 BC, at Athens in Greece. His method was to ask questions. His critical questions irritated some citizens of Athens. He was put on trial, and condemned to death.

Socrates could have escaped, but he accepted the death sentence. In 399 BC, Socrates willingly drank the poison called hemlock. Thus, the life of a great thinker came to an end.

Alexander's Tutor

Alexander the Great had a brilliant tutor. It was none other than Aristotle. He tutored Alexander the Great as a boy, on King Philip's request. Alexander's library in Alexandria ensured the enduring legacy of Aristotle's ideas.

What made Plato one of the most prominent among the Greek thinkers?

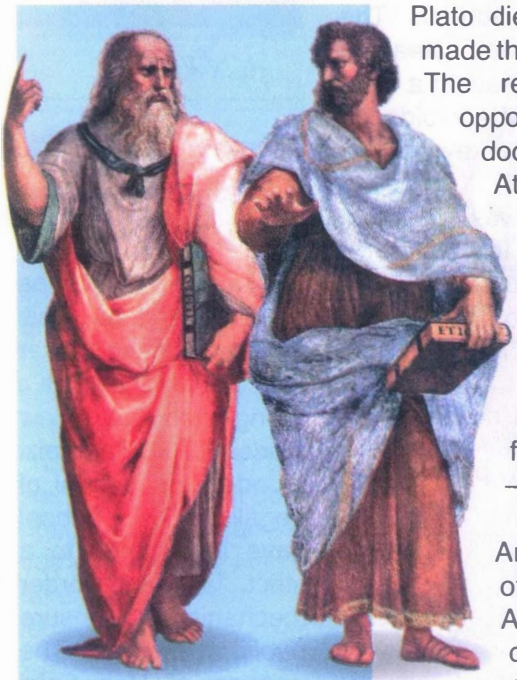
Plato, who was born in 427 BC in a noble Athenian family, founded the world's first university. He was the first philosopher to produce a considerable quantity of work.

Plato left Athens and travelled, probably in Egypt and Sicily. He gained knowledge of the Pythagorean philosophy. Plato returned to Athens in 387 BC. He founded the Academy in Athens.

The Academy was based on the principle that students should learn to criticise and think for themselves, instead of accepting the views of their

teacher without question. The Academy is regarded as the first university.

Many brilliant thinkers were schooled in the Academy. Aristotle was its most famous pupil. Plato, along with Aristotle, has been the most important influence on Western philosophy.



Plato along with Aristotle- Raphael's Famous Painting

Why did Aristotle leave the Academy?

At the age of seventeen, Aristotle was sent to study at Plato's Academy. Aristotle was born in Stageria in Northern Greece in 384 BC.

As student and teacher, Aristotle spent twenty years of his life in Plato's Academy. When Plato died, Aristotle was not made the head of the Academy. The reason was that, he opposed certain Platonic doctrines. So, he left Athens.

Aristotle was invited to become tutor to King Phillip's son, Alexander in 323 BC. Following King Phillip'sdeath, Aristotle returned to Athens. He founded his own school – the Lyceum.

However, like Socrates, Aristotle was also accused of showing disrespect. Aristotle escaped, but he died a year later of a stomach illness. Aristotle made a huge contribution to Western thought.

What are the major contributions of Epicurus?

Epicurus was born in 341 BC. His father was a schoolteacher, in Samos.

Epicurus set up his own school in Athens. The school was known as the 'Garden,' for the teaching took place in the garden of his house. Epicurus was not rigid in his approach, and accepted women and slaves as students. The school was the centre for spreading Epicurus' philosophy. Leading a calm and controlled life, and the avoidance of religious practices are key parts of this philosophy.

Lucretius, the poet was his most important disciple. 'On the Nature of Things', penned by Lucretius introduced Epicureanism to the Roman world. Epicurus died in 270 BC.

Epicurus

Why is Han Feizi's life considered as a tragic one?

Han Feizi's life was not an easy one. This famous Chinese thinker was born in 280 BC. Along with his fellow student Li Si, Han Feizi founded the School of Legalism.The School gave importance to a strict law and order mechanism to ensure public order. The writings of Han Feizi caught the attention of Shi Huangdi, the ruler

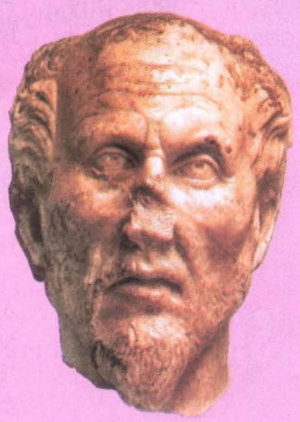
Han Feizi

of Qin. However, Li Si who had become Chancellor of Qin, turned Shi Huangdi against Han Feiezi. Han Feizi was imprisoned. He wrote from prison to Shi Huangdi, and gave him advice on how to gain total control over the warring states of China.

Li Si continued to plot against Han Feizi. He sent poison to the prison, so that Han Feizi could commit suicide. Han Feizi did take the poison. However, legalism greatly influenced Chinese philosophy. Even, Mao Ze Dong, the great leader of modern China was greatly influenced by legalism.

Plotinus

Plotinus was a Roman thinker. Born in AD 205, Plotinus lived during a period of great unrest within the Roman Empire. His great aim was to gain knowledge of the ideal world. His versions of philosophy of Platonism influenced the development of Christian metaphysics in the Middle Ages. Metaphysics is the part of philosophy that is about understanding existence and knowledge. Plotinus died in AD 270.



How did the famous book of Boethius reflect his life?

'The Consolation of Philosophy' is the most famous book by Boethius. The story of his life forms the background of the book. He served the Ostrogoth king of Italy. Boethius rose to become the head of all government and court offices.

However, he was accused of treachery, and put to death in AD 524. In 'The Consolation of Philosophy', he describes how Lady Philosophy consoles him during his misfortunes.

Boethius

Boethius was born into a high ranking Roman family in AD 480 . He was the last of the Roman philosophers, and

Augustine of Hippo

Augustine of Hippo was one of the great saints of the Catholic faith. He was born in North Africa in AD 354. Amazingly, Augustine is the author of two hundred and thirty works. The best known are his autobiography, 'The Confessions' and 'The City of God'. Augustine of Hippo died in AD 430.

the first of the Scholastics. The Scholastics believed in thinking critically.

Boethius translated some works of Aristotle into Latin. He also wrote commentaries on Aristotle and works on logic.

City of Bukhara

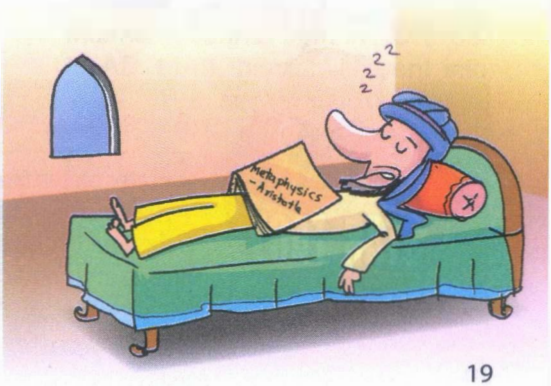
Why is Avicenna (Ibn Sina) considered as a key philosopher and doctor of the middle ages?

Avicenna was born near Bukhara, capital of present day Uzbekistan in AD 980.

Avicenna combined the Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian traditions of philosophy with Muslim theology. Thus, Avicenna's philosophical system was formed.

Avicenna read Aristotle's 'Metaphysics' forty times to memorize it. He also studied medicine. By the age of sixteen, he was treating people. He cured the King of Bukhara of an illness.

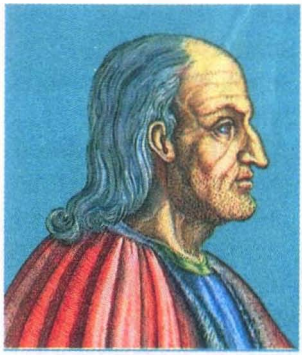
Avicenna was a prolific writer too. Some 150 of his works on philosophy and 40 on medicine have survived. His famous 'Book of Healing' is an encyclopaedia of philosophy. He wrote the 'Canon of Medicine' which was used as the main medical textbook throughout medieval Europe. Avicenna died in AD 1037.



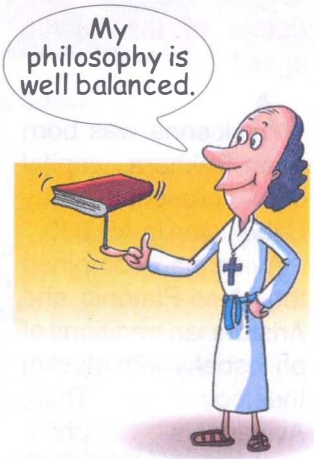
Why is Anselm of Canterbury a remarkable figure among philosophers?

Anselm was an Italian thinker who made brilliant contributions to philosophy. Anselm was born at Aosta in Italy, in AD 1033. He joined the Benedictine Abbey at Normandy in France. Anselm was appointed as Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the Church of England in AD 1093. He was a gifted scholar, and penned his masterpiece, the 'Proslogion' in AD 1078.

Anselm's philosophy was one of 'faith seeking understanding'. By this, Anselm meant that reason deepens one's grasp of truths. He found various arguments in support of Trinity, and other beliefs of the Christian faith. The Trinity is the existence of one God in three forms while atonement is a way of saying sorry for one's sins. Anselm passed away in AD 1109.

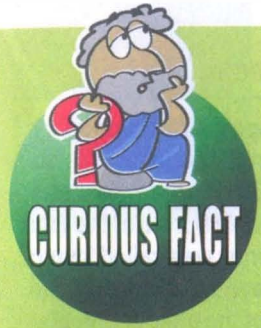


Anselm



Avicenna the Crater

A crater on the Moon has been named after Avicenna (the Latinized name of Ibn Sina) in honour of his remarkable achievements as an astronomer and scientist.



The Sishu or Four Books

The Sishu or Four Books were studied by the Chinese for 2400 years. The teachings of Confucius were written down by his students and compiled in the Sishu.

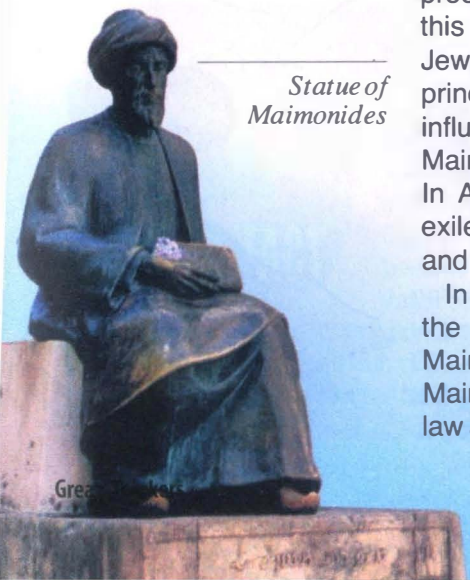
The Tomb of Maimonides

What is 'The Guide for the Perplexed'?

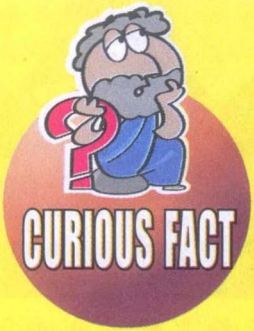
'The Guide for the Perplexed' was written by the great Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides.

Perplexed means confused and worried. The guide offers several proofs for the existence of God. In this work, he aimed to explain Jewish theology based on the principles of Aristotle. The guide influenced many philosophers. Maimonides was born in AD 1135. In AD 1148, his family went into exile. The family lived in Spain, and then in Egypt.

In Egypt, he became physician to the Wazir of Sultan Saladin. Maimonides died in AD 1204. Maimonides also wrote on Jewish law and medicine.



Statue of Maimonides



Diogenes of Sinope

Diogenes of Sinope was a philosopher who slept in a barrel. Diogenes was born in Greece in 400 BC. His lifestyle was below the acceptable norms of the time. Therefore, Diogenes was called 'cynic', from 'kynikos' meaning 'like a dog'. He was the founder of the philosophical school known as The Cynics. Diogenes died in 325 BC.

What is the significance of Averroes (Ibn Rushd) as a philosopher?

Averroes became famous for his commentaries on Aristotle. He wrote thirty eight commentaries in all. All of them were on Aristotle. His work caught the attention of medieval thinkers, and the teachings of Aristotle were rediscovered.

Averroes was born in AD 1126. He became a judge in Seville and Cordoba. Later, he changed his profession, and became court physician to the Caliph of Cordoba. He wrote his commentaries during this time. Later, he was accused of heresy and exiled. He died in AD 1198. Averroes was one of the great philosophers of the Medieval world.

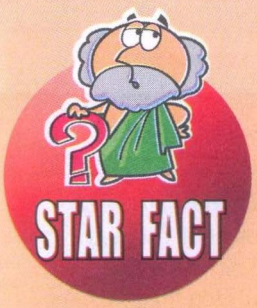
AN ERA OF AWAKENING

Thomas Aquinas

Why is Thomas Aquinas, considered as one of the most prominent among the western philosophers?

Thomas Aquinas is widely regarded as the greatest theologian of the Catholic Church. A theologian is an expert in religious belief.

Thomas Aquinas came from a noble family. He was born in the kingdom of Naples, Italy, in AD 1225. Thomas wished to be a monk, but his family refused to give him permission to do so. Later, they reversed their decision, and allowed him to become a monk. He studied under the Aristotelean teacher, Albertus Magnus in Cologne and Paris for many years. Thomas Aquinas died in AD 1274. His brand of philosophy came to be known as Thomism.

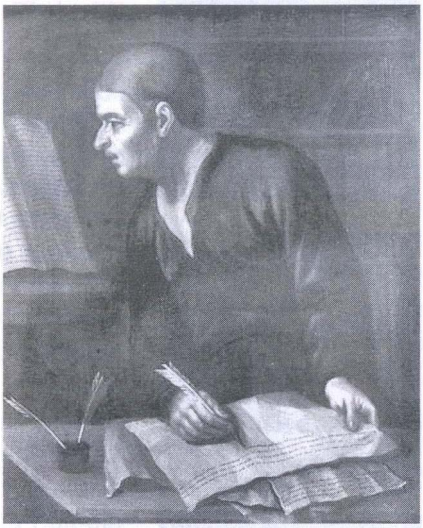


Hemlock

Socrates was famous in life. His death made him even more famous. Socrates was ordered by the court to drink hemlock, a strong poison. The poison killed Socrates. The death of the philosopher became a favourite subject of artists. Jacques-Louis David created a remarkable painting of Socrates' death in the eighteenth century. The death of Socrates, a death he willingly accepted, was a sacrifice made for educated individuals.

Who were the 'Dunses'?

The Dunses were the followers of Duns Scotus, the Scottish philosopher. Scotus was born in AD 1266. He became a Franciscan monk in AD 1281, and a priest ten years later. Duns Scotus studied at Oxford, and went on to teach there and later on in Paris. He was expelled for taking the side of the Pope against the king. Scotus was taken back after a while. He was opposed to the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Scotus came to be known as 'the Subtle Doctor', because of his accurate arguments. Scotus died in AD 1308 .



Duns Scotus

Meister Eckhart

Meister Eckhart was a German philosopher. He was a follower of Thomas Aquinas. He is best known for his sermons, which dealt with the presence of God within man's soul. Meister Eckhart lived from AD 1260 to1327.

Why is Erasmus considered as an important figure in the renaissance period?

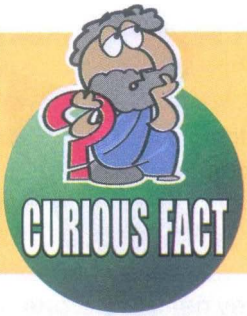
Erasmus satirized or made fun of religious practices. His book 'In Praise of Folly' is a satire of religious practices of the time. He wrote it in 1509.

Erasmus was a severe critic of orthodox Catholicism. He was on a mission to reform organised religion. His project was in many ways like that of Martin Luther who began the Protestant faith. However, Erasmus did not agree with Luther's views on free will. Erasmus was born in Holland in 1466. He became a priest in 1492, and studied in Paris. He was an important figure in Northern Europe's renaissance or cultural revival. Erasmus died in 1536.

Erasmus

Zeno and His Paradoxes

For over two thousand years, Zeno's paradoxes have puzzled, challenged, influenced, and amused intellectuals. A paradox is a situation or statement that is difficult to understand for it contains two opposite facts or characteristics. The most famous of his paradoxes are the "arguments against motion".



The Laughing Philosopher

Democritus was known as 'The Laughing Philosopher'. He was often cheerful while at work. So he became famous as 'The Laughing Philosopher'

Why is Niccolo Machiavelli linked with political philosophy?

Machiavelli

Machiavelli was a master of political philosophy. He was born in Italy in 1469. He lived in Florence, and became a diplomat for the Florentine Republic. Later, he was imprisoned and tortured. The new Pope freed him in 1513, but he was forced to retire from political life. He continued to write theories on politics. He penned many books.

Machiavelli wrote his masterpiece 'The Prince' in 1513. Four years later, he wrote the 'Discourses on Livy'. This

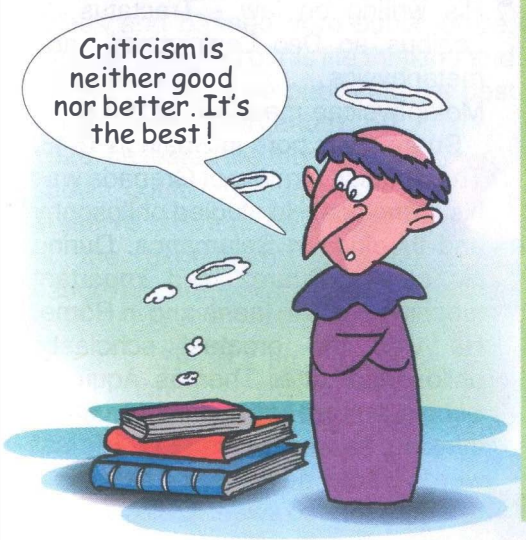
Machiavellian

Machiavelli was infamous for plotting and scheming during his own lifetime. So the word 'Machiavellian' entered in the dictionary. It refers to scheming and the ruthless use of political power.

work is an analysis of Livy's History of the Roman Republic. Machiavelli died in 1527.

Why is Francisco de Vitoria regarded as a good philosopher?

Francisco de Vitoria spoke for the people of South America. This famous philosopher lived in the time of Spain's conquest of South America. Though a citizen of Spain, he was against the forcible conversion of South Americans to Christianity. He argued that they should be given rights to property, and be offered self government too. Born in 1480, de Vitoria founded a scholastic movement known as the School of Salamanca. Scholastics were noted for their critical thinking. He joined the Dominican order. Later, he took the Chair in theology at the University of Salamanca. Francisco de Vitoria died in 1546.



CURIOUS FACT

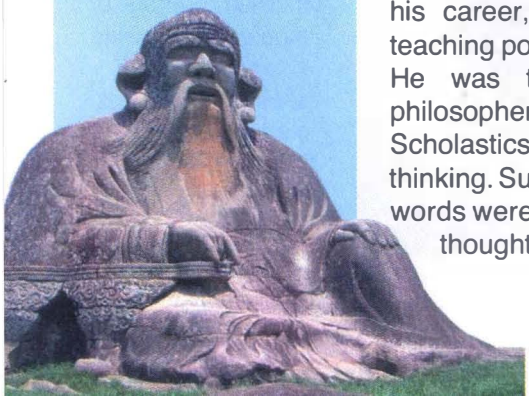
Tough Life

Confucius the philosopher worked as a labourer. He married at the age of nineteen. Confucius also worked as a shepherd, cowherd, clerk and book-keeper to support his family.

Lao Tzu

Lao Tzu means 'old master' in Chinese. However the identity of the man who bears this title, and whether he really lived at all, is uncertain. Many Chinese believe that he lived in the 6th century BC. Lao Tzu is considered to be the author of most important works in Chinese philosophy.

Statue of Lao Tsu



Francisco Suarez

Why is Francisco Suarez regarded as a great philosopher?

Francisco Suarez was regarded as the greatest living philosopher of his time. He wrote on many topics. His writing on law - Tractatus de Legibus ac Deo Legislatore - and metaphysics - Disputationes Metaphysicae made him famous.

Suarez was born in Spain in 1548. The Spanish territory of Granada was his birthplace. He studied philosophy and theology in Salamanca. During his career, Suarez held important teaching posts in Iberia and in Rome. He was the greatest scholastic philosopher after Thomas Aquinas. Scholastics are known for their critical thinking. Suarez died in 1617. His last words were 'I never would have thought it so sweet to die'.

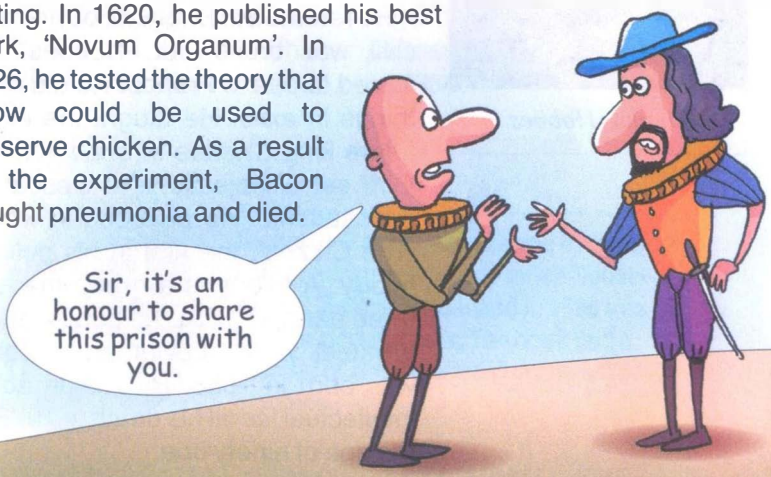
Why is Francis Bacon regarded as the inspiration behind the founding of the Royal Society?

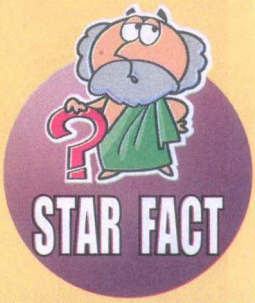
Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon had a great vision of a college dedicated to scientific research. His vision inspired the founding of the Royal Society- the greatest gathering of scientists the world has ever known. The Royal Society was founded in 1660.

Francis Bacon was the youngest son of Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. He was born in England in 1561. Bacon studied law. Then, he became a member of parliament, and rose to the position of Lord Chancellor.

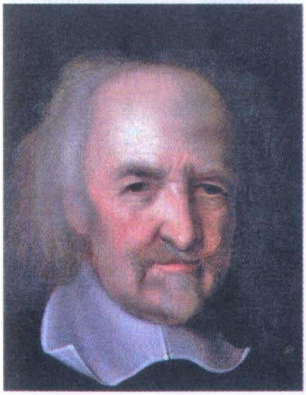
However, Bacon was jailed for taking bribes and banned from public office. He spent the rest of his life thinking and writing. In 1620, he published his best work, 'Novum Organum'. In 1626, he tested the theory that snow could be used to preserve chicken. As a result of the experiment, Bacon caught pneumonia and died.





Bacon's Ideology

Bacon is best known for his philosophy of science. He realised that with the aid of scientific knowledge, mankind could control nature. He saw this as a route to prosperity, social progress, and human well-being.



Thomas Hobbes

Who was the first modern materialist?

Thomas Hobbes, the Englishman, was the first modern materialist. A materialist believes that all things are composed of material. He left his native land and travelled widely in Europe.

He returned to England, but in 1640, civil war broke out. Hobbes was forced to flee to France. He did great things in exile. He taught the exiled future king Charles II, and wrote the third set of objections to Descartes' 'Meditations'. He also began writing 'The Citizen', the first in his political trilogy. A trilogy is a group made of three parts. In 1651, he published his greatest work, 'Leviathan'. Hobbes was born in 1588. He led an active intellectual life till his death in 1679, at the age of ninety one.

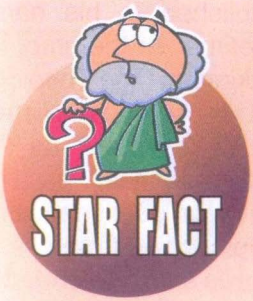
Rene Descartes

Why did Rene Descartes decide against publishing his book, 'Treatise on the World'?

Rene Descartes wrote 'Treatise on the World'. When he heard that Galileo had been condemned for saying that the Earth is round, he withdrew his work from publication. In his book, he described the nature and the working of the physical universe.

'The Discourse on Method' was his first published work. His views about existence and knowledge, can be found in this book.

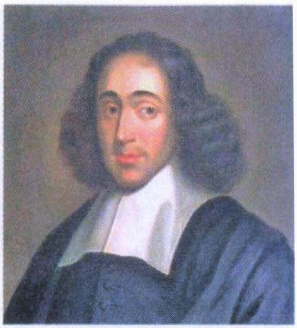
Descartes was born in a French village in 1596. He worked in the military, and settled in Holland. The writings of Descartes were easily available to the public. So, his philosophy is regarded as the first modern philosophy. Descartes died in 1650.



Michel de Montaigne

Michel de Montaigne was one of the most important writers of the French Renaissance. 'Essais' published in 1580 was his most important work. The book had a number of short discussions on a variety of topics.

Spinoza's House- Now a Museum



Spinoza

Why is Benedictus Spinoza regarded as the most radical among the modern thinkers?

Spinoza was shunned by his own community for his radical ideas. Benedictus Spinoza was born in Amsterdam in 1632,and had an orthodox Jewish upbringing.

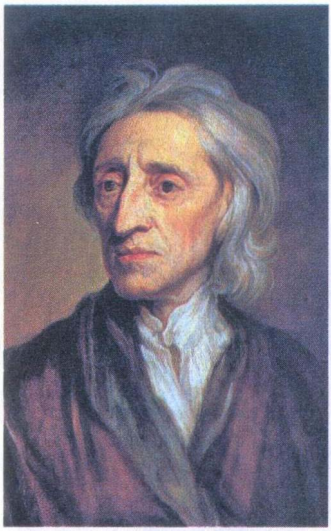
Spinoza completed a critical work on Descartes' 'Principles of Philosophy' in 1663. It was the only work he published in his name during his lifetime. At the time, he was also working on 'The Theological-Political Treatise'. He published it without naming himself as the author. His masterpiece was 'The Ethics,' but it was published after his death. Spinoza suffered from tuberculosis. His short life ended in 1677.

What is the significance of John Locke in the history of philosophy?

Initially, John Locke lacked interest in philosophy, but he went on to become a famous philosopher.

Locke's interest in philosophy began when he studied Descartes' philosophy in France. Locke's ambition was to find the limits of human knowledge. He became the first of the great Empiricist philosophers. Empiricists say that all knowledge is based on experience got from the senses.

John Locke was born in England in 1632. In 1690, he published 'The Essay' and 'The Two Treatises of Government'. These two works ensured his fame. John Locke died in 1704.



John Locke

Nickname

Plato was a philosopher with broad shoulders. Plato which means broad or wide in Greek is his nickname. His actual name was Aristocles.

Nicomachean Ethics

Aristotle's son died in a battle, while still a lad. Nichomachus was his name. 'Nichomachean Ethics', is a compilation of Aristotle's lecture notes. It was probably named after the late Nichomachus and dedicated to him.

Leibniz

Why is Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz regarded as a philosopher with many talents?

Leibniz, the great philosopher made contributions to law, geology, physics, and engineering. During his lifetime, he was best known as a mathematician.

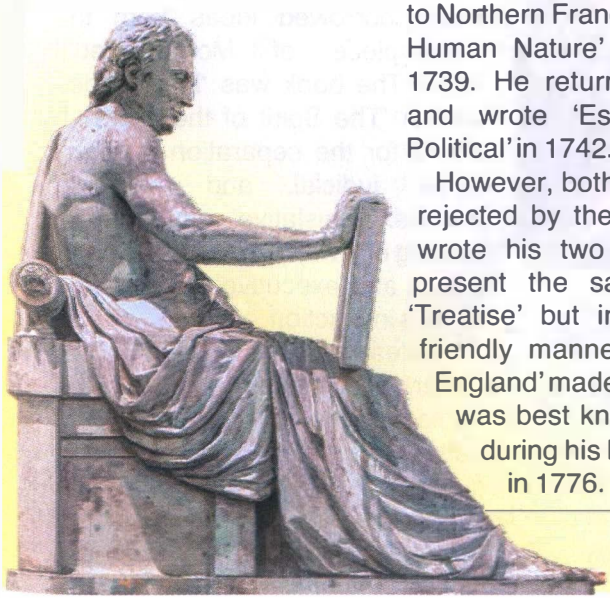
Leibniz was born in Germany in 1646. Along with Spinoza, he is regarded as a leading rationalist philosopher. Rationalism is the philosophy of basing opinions and action on reason and knowledge. Leibniz died in 1716.

Why is David Hume regarded as a philosopher who made history?

David Hume wrote books on philosophy and history. He is regarded as the greatest philosopher to have written in the English language.

Hume was born in Scotland to a minor land owning family. He was born in 1711. Hume shifted to Northern France. His 'Treatise on Human Nature' was published in 1739. He returned to Edinburgh, and wrote 'Essays: Moral and Political' in 1742.

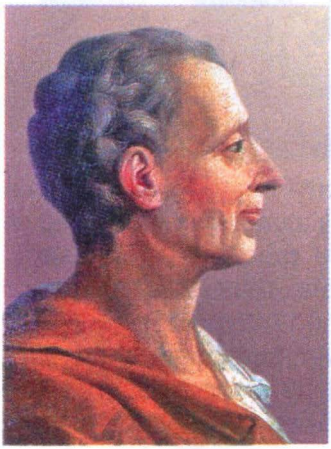
However, both these works were rejected by the public. So Hume wrote his two 'Enquiries' which present the same ideas as in 'Treatise' but in a more reader-friendly manner. His 'History of England' made Hume popular. He was best known as a historian during his lifetime. Hume died in 1776.



Statue of David Hume

George Berkeley

George Berkeley was an Irish philosopher who believed in God. According to him, God understands and takes care of everything that exists. The universe is essentially mental rather than material. Berkley was born in 1685, and he passed away in 1753.



Montesquieu

What is the US connection of the French philosopher, Montesquieu?

The framers of the US constitution borrowed ideas from the masterpiece of Montesquieu's book. The book was 'L'espirt des lois' or 'The Spirit of the Laws'. It called for the separation of legislative, judicial, and executive powers. 'Legislative' relates to the making of laws, 'judicial' to the court of law, and 'executive' to the putting of laws into action.

Montesquieu was a great philosopher. He was born into a French noble family in 1689. 'Persian Letters' gave him his first literary success in 1721. 'Causes of the Greatness and Decadence of the Romans,' was another important work. Montesquieu died in 1755.

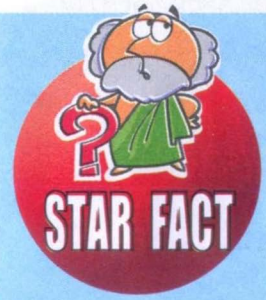
Voltaire

What are the major contributions of Voltaire?

Francois-Marie Arouet, or Voltaire, was one of the most prominent among the Enlightenment writers.

The writings of Voltaire had an effect on the changing ideas of liberty and forms of government, which contributed to the start of the French Revolution.

Voltaire was born in 1694 in Paris. He wrote numerous philosophical works. His major works were, 'La Henriade' and 'Lettres Philosophiques'. Voltaire also wrote prose, and poetry. In 'Candide,' his most famous work of prose, Voltaire developed a critique of Leibniz's philosophy.Voltaire is known as a defender of religious freedom, free trade and civil liberties. Voltaire, the great philosopher died in 1778.



Philosophes of Paris

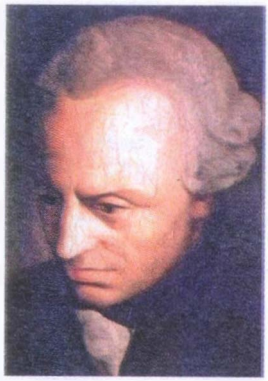
'Philosophes' were a group of brilliant thinkers in Paris. Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesquieu were members of this group. Philosophes contributed to the great 'Encyclopedie' edited by Denis Diderot.

What are the views of Jean-Jacques Rousseau?

Human beings are basically good, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It is society that corrupts their behaviour. This argument can be found in his famous book, 'The Social Contract'. His political theory is presented in this book.

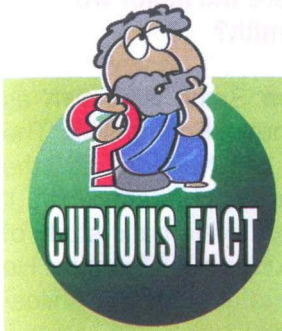
Rousseau was born in 1712. He ran away from his native land of Switzerland to France. There he met with philosophes, and contributed to Diderot's 'Encyclopedie'. He won the Academy of Dijon prize in 1750, for his 'Discourses on the Sciences and Arts'. Rousseau wrote 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality' in which he blames society for corrupting the individual. He published 'Emile' in 1762, which contains his educational theory.

'Confessions' is the autobiography of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau is known as the first philosopher of Romanticism. This great philosopher died in 1778.



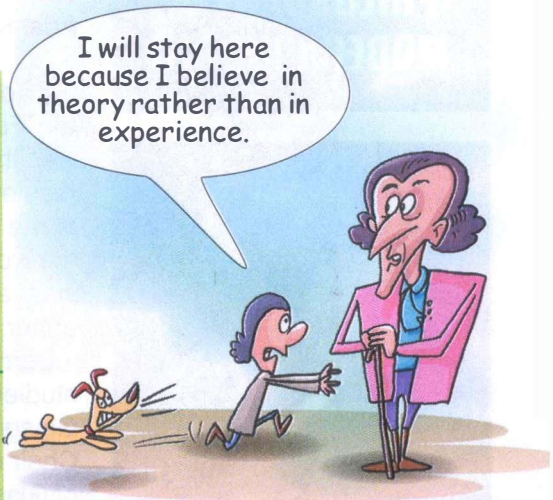
Immanuel Kant

Statue of Jean-Jacques Rousseau



Fear of Sickness

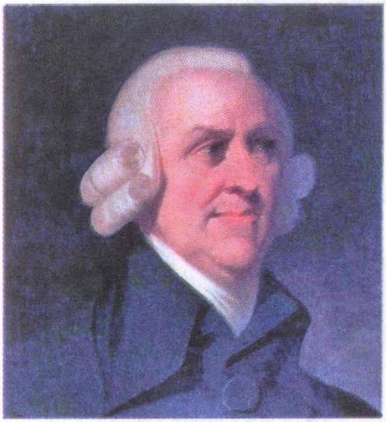
Immanuel Kant did not want to lose a single day to sickness. Sometimes, he did not even respond to people who greeted him, for fear of opening his mouth and breathing in a sickness!



What made Immanuel Kant different from his contemporaries?

Immanuel Kant's revolution in metaphysics is perhaps the most important philosophical development of modern times. His influence in the areas of philosophy of religion and aesthetics has been equally great. His first work of moral philosophy, the 'Groundwork', was published in 1785. He became so famous that many claimed to be influenced by his philosophy.

Kant was born in the German town of Konigsberg in 1724. He never travelled more than a day's journey from home. He died in 1804.



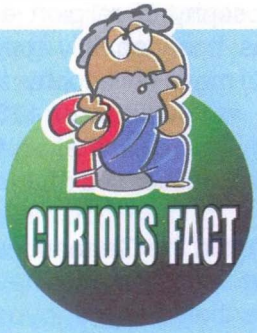
Adam Smith

What were the major works of Adam Smith?

Adam Smith is known as the 'Father of Economics'. 'The wealth of Nations' is the masterpiece of Adam Smith. It is the first systematic study of the workings of economics. He was a notable moral philosopher, too.

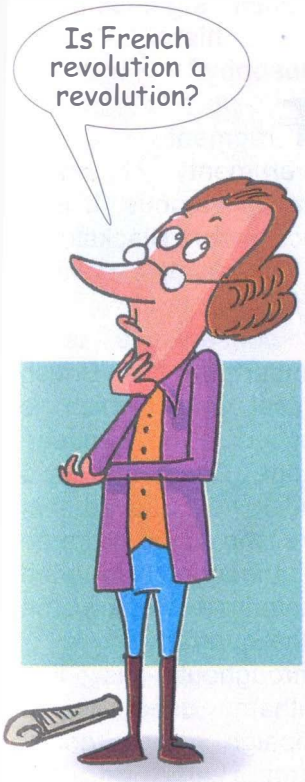
Born in 1723, in Scotland, he studied at the University of Glasgow. He obtained the Chair in Logic at the University of Glasgow in 1751.

Adam Smith published a major work 'The Theory of Moral Sentiments' in 1759. 'An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations' is another important work. Adam Smith died in1790.



Hume or Home

David Hume was originally named David Home. 'Home' was pronounced 'Hume' in his native land of Scotland but this pronunciation was unknown in England. So he changed the spelling of his name from 'Home' to 'Hume' in 1734.

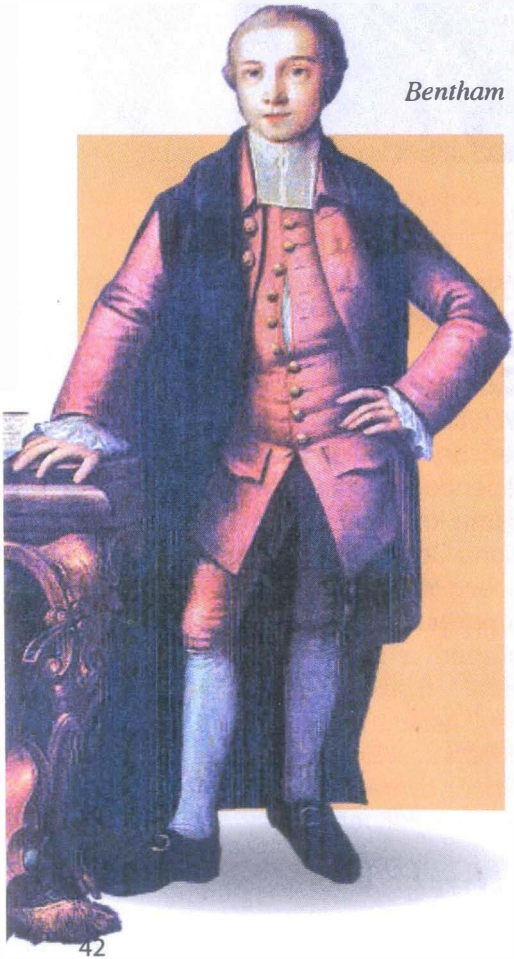


Edmund Burke

Why is Edmund Burke said to be a man of contradictions?

Edmund Burke opposed the French Revolution, but he supported the American colonies' fight for independence from Britain. He thus became known as the man of contradictions.Contradiction means ideas opposed to one another.

Burke was born in Ireland in 1729.He published a book, 'A Vindication of Natural Society,' without naming himself as author, in 1756. He wrote, 'A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful'. The book influenced the thinking of Kant. Edmund Burke's life came to an end in 1797.



Bentham

What made Jeremy Bentham significant in the history of philosophy?

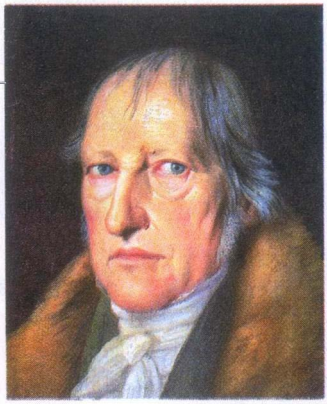
'Fragment on Government' made Bentham famous. It is a criticism of Blackstone, the conservative political theorist.

A conservative is a member of the British political party which is opposed to sudden change. Bentham was a radical; he believed that there should be extreme social change. He founded 'Westminster Review', the radical quarterly.

Throughout his life, Bentham used it to campaign for social reform. Later on, the quarterly was edited by John Stuart Mill. Bentham was an Englishman. He was born in 1748, and studied law at Oxford. The French republic made him an honorary citizen in 1792. Bentham passed away in 1832.

Bentham For Ever

Bentham arranged to have his body embalmed as an 'auto-icon'. Even today, visitors to London's University College can view Bentham's embalmed body. Bentham was the founder of the college.

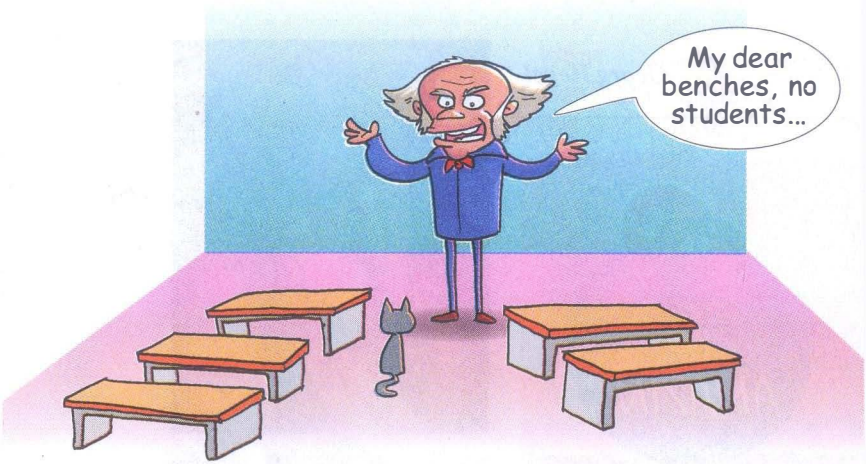


What links Georg Hegel and the Jena University?

At the Jena University, Georg Hegel renewed his friendship with Schelling, the famous thinker. Hegel worked as a lecturer there. Hegel and Schelling combined to write 'Critical Journal of Philosophy'.

Hegel completed his master-piece, 'The Phenomenology of Spirit' in 1807. His 'Science of Logic' appeared in 1816, following which; he obtained the Chair of Philosophy at Heidelberg, and later in Berlin.

Hegel was born in 1770. He became the foremost German philosopher of his time. Hegel passed away in 1831.

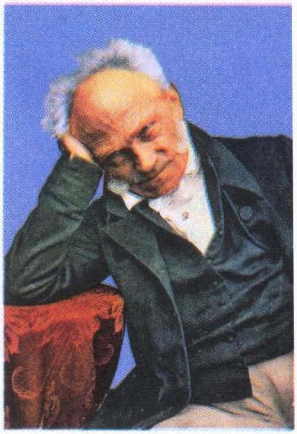


Why were Arthur Schopenhauer's lectures marked by poor attendance?

Arthur Schopenhauer was a brilliant philosopher, but his lectures were poorly attended. He taught at the University of Berlin.

George Hegel, the philosopher was also teaching there. Students crowded to hear the lectures of Hegel. Hardly anyone attended the lectures of Schopenhauer, and he left the university. He then wrote many books. 'Fourfold Root' and 'The World as Will and Representation' are two of his important works.

Schopenhauer was born in Prussia in 1788. He received his doctorate from the Jena University. Schopenhauer died in 1860.



Schopenhauer

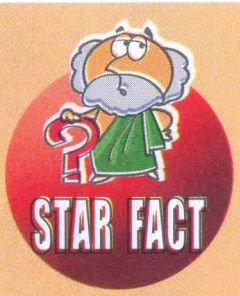
Schelling

Why is Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling regarded as a key philosopher?

Schelling had a telling influence on Georg Hegel, the great philosopher. Schelling was a classmate of Hegel. They studied together at the Tubingen University, and later, both taught at the Jena University. It was due to Schelling that Hegel realised the importance of history.

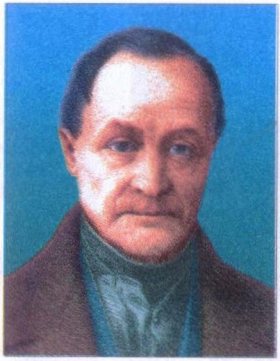
Schelling himself was a well known German philosopher. He was born in 1775. Like Hegel and Fichte, Schelling began his career as a theologian. Later, he switched to an academic career in philosophy. He took a position under Fichte in Jena.

Later, he took chairs at Wurzburg, Erlangen, Munich, and Berlin. He coined the term 'Absolute idealism'. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Von Schelling passed away in 1854.



Johann Gottlieb Fichte

Johann Gottlieb Fichte was the first of a group of thinkers known as the German Idealists. He was also the first German thinker to be influenced by the philosophical revolution of Immanuel Kant. Following defeats by Napoleon, Fichte called for a moral reawakening of Germany. Fichte lived from 1762 to 1814.



Auguste Comte

What is the significance of Auguste Comte in the history of philosophy?

Auguste Comte, was a French philosopher who did not believe in God. He was an atheist.

Comte, was born in 1798. He coined the term 'sociology'. Sociology is the study of people living in groups. Comte developed a theory of human intellectual and sociological development. His zeal for his positivist ideology led him to develop an atheistic religion. The religion had its own ceremonies and festivals. He even invented a calendar of 'secular saints'.

Adam Smith, the economist and philosopher was one such 'secular saint'. Comte died in 1857.

Soren Kierkegaard

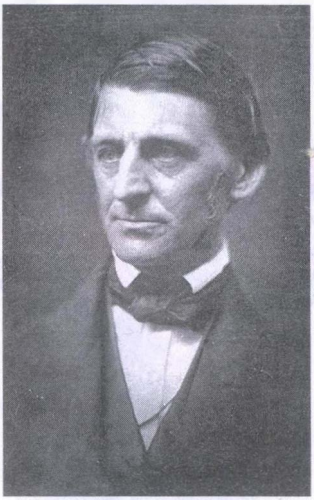
Soren Kierkegaard is regarded as the philosopher who laid the foundation of existentialism. This Danish philosopher was born in 1813. According to existentialism, the world is meaningless, and each person is completely responsible for his actions. Kierkegaard accused Hegelian thinkers of ignoring individual experience, the personal relationship with God, and the importance of individual choice. He died in 1855.

Why is Ralph Waldo Emerson considered as a major American philosopher?

Ralph Waldo Emerson was a celebrated American philosopher. His major theme was the unity of nature.

Emerson was not a systematic thinker. However, his numerous essays, speeches, and sermons sparked great interest. He was against accepting traditional authority.

Emerson promoted self reliance. He was a major poet and essayist as well. Born in 1803, he influenced philosophers like William James and Nietzsche. Emerson died in 1882.



Emerson

John Stuart Mill

Why is John Stuart Mill regarded as a genius?

By the age of six, John Stuart Mill had read the histories written by Hume and Gibbon. He mastered Greek and Latin by seven years and logic by twelve. By the age of sixteen, he had become an expert economist. These achievements are recorded in his autobiography.

He was educated by his father, the philosopher and economist, James Mill. This tough schedule affected the health of the youngster, and he suffered a nervous breakdown.

John Stuart Mill was born in England in 1806. In the 1830s, he became the editor of the 'Westminster Review' founded by Jeremy Bentham. Mill passed away in 1873.

Why is Karl Marx regarded as a towering figure in world history?

Millions of human beings believe in the philosophy of Karl Marx. His ideas had a far reaching effect on world history.

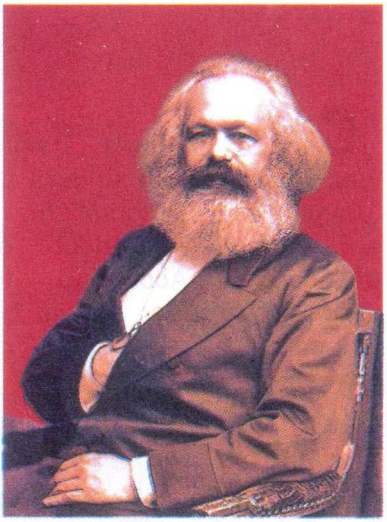
Marx was born in 1818, in Germany. He was against religion

from a very young age. He studied law in the university, but he turned to philosophy.

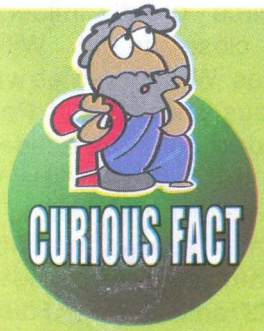
Marx was connected with the young followers of Georg Hegel. In 1843, he met Friedrich Engels. Engels' family ran a successful business in Manchester.

Marx learned of the conditions in industrial England from him. Both Marx and Engels were exiled in 1845. They moved to Brussels. They wrote 'The Communist Manifesto' in Brussels.

In 1867, the first volume of his great work 'Das Kapital,' was published. The second and third volumes appeared after his death. Karl Marx died in 1883.



Karl Marx



Rousseau and Geneva

During the time of Rousseau, Geneva was a city-state. Later, it became part of Switzerland. Rousseau usually signed his books 'Jean Jacques Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva'.

RISE OF NEW SCHOOLS

Why is Charles Sanders Peirce regarded as a notable philosopher?

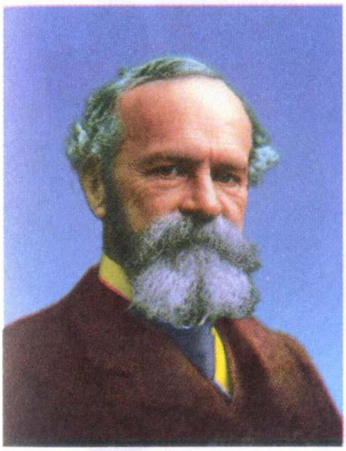
Charles Sanders Peirce was one of the founders of 'pragmatism'. Pragmatism is an American school of philosophy. According to pragmatism, ideas should be judged by their usefulness or workability.

Charles Sanders Peirce

Peirce was born in 1839. He was a scientist rather than a philosopher, and his laboratory experience remained a key influence on his thought.

Peirce greatly influenced his close friend William James. William James was a famous philosopher. Peirce failed to hold any academic post in philosophy. He was not well known during his lifetime. It was his friend William James who made his works famous. Peirce died in 1914.

What is the significance of William James in the history of philosophy?



William James

William James wrote 'The Will to Believe' in 1897. This paper shows that he was attracted to religious beliefs throughout his life.

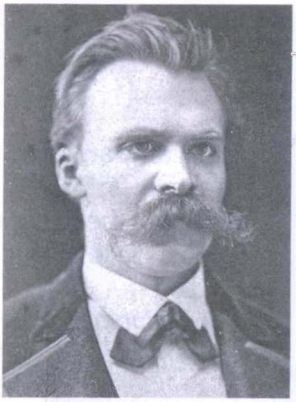
'The Principles of Psychology' was his first major work. This book was published in 1890. James was hugely influenced by Peirce and his philosophy of pragmatism.

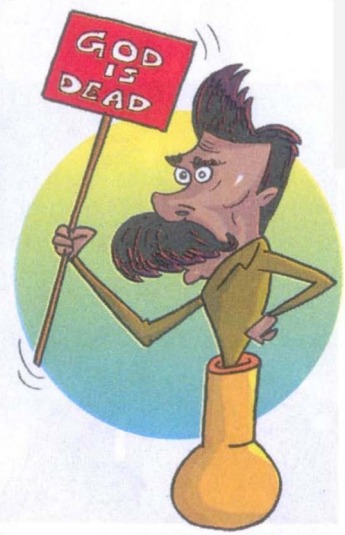
William James was born in New York in 1842. His was a wealthy New York family familiar with different countries and cultures. He worked only at Harvard in his lifetime.

William James started out in medicine. Then he opted for psychology, and finally, philosophy. He gained lasting fame as a philosopher. William James died in 1910.

Leibniz' Calculating Machine

Gottfried Leibniz invented the first calculating machine that could add, subtract, multiply, and divide.



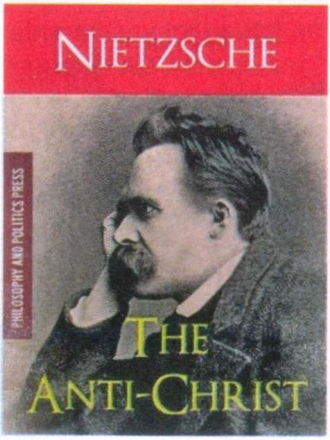


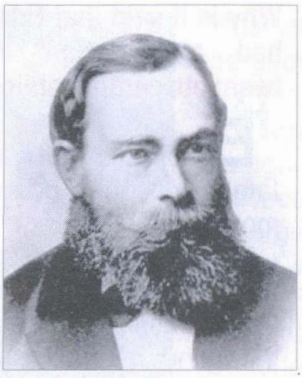
Why is Friedrich Nietzsche considered as a great philosopher?

The accidental discovery of a book in 1865 helped to make Nietzsche a great philosopher. The book was 'The World as Will and Representation' written by Arthur Schopenhauer.

Nietzsche was born in 1844 to a Lutheran pastor in Germany. Nietzsche gave up his academic career in 1879 because of ill health.

'Thus spoke Zarathustra,' his literary philosophical masterpiece was penned during this period. In 1889, Nietzsche saw a man beat a horse, and collapsed. Nietzsche never regained his sanity. His life came to an end in 1900.





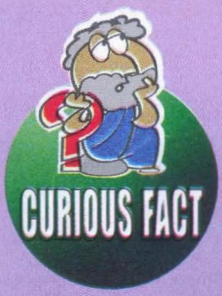
Gottlob Frege

Who is considered as the proponent of modern logic?

Gottlob Frege, the German philosopher, was the proponent of modern logic.

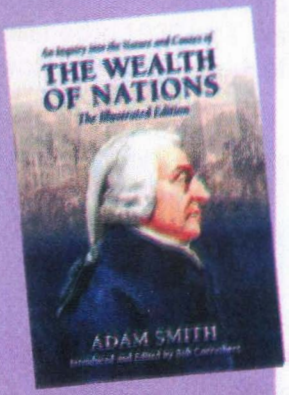
He was born in 1848. 'Begriffsschrift' published in 1879, was his first major work. The meaning of the title is 'conceptual notation'. 'The Foundations of Arithmetic' appeared in 1884. The book was an attempt to ground arithmetic in logic.

'Function and Concept' (1891), 'On Concept and Object' (1891), and, 'On Sense and Reference' (1892) are three of his key essays. He outlined his philosophy of language primarily in these essays. Frege passed away in 1925.



Adam Smith and Wealth

The Wealth of Nations, written by Adam Smith is regarded as the 'Bible of Capitalism'. The first system of political economy is detailed in this book.



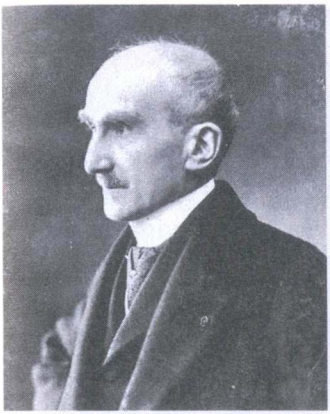
Why is it said that Edmund Husserl had a profound influence on twentieth century philosophy?

Husserl

Edmund Husserl was the founding father of the phenomenological movement.

Phenomenology describes the way the world appears to consciousness. Consciousness is the awareness of the mind of itself and the world. Edmund Husserl was born in Moravia in 1859. Moravia lies in the modern Czech Republic. Husserl completed his doctorate at Vienna in 1883. He began working on his 'Philosophy of Arithmetic' while teaching at Halle.

When the Nazis grew powerful, Husserl was targeted, and his books were banned. Husserl died in 1938.



Henri Bergson

What were the major works of Henri Bergson?

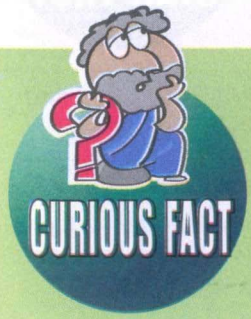
Henri Bergson published 'Laughter' in 1901. It is an essay on the meaning of comedy.

Bergson was a French philosopher who was born in the year 1859. Schooled in Paris, Bergson graduated from the Ecole Normale Superieure in 1881. 'Creative Evolution', his critique of Darwin, was published in 1907.

In 1908, Bergson met William James. James introduced him to English speaking philosophers.

Bergson was influential in the world of literature and was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1927.

'The Two Sources of Morality and Religion' published in 1932 was his last major work. Bergson died of bronchitis in 1941.



Auguste Comte and Sociology

Auguste Comte gave the term 'sociology' the meaning it holds today. The French essayist Emmanuel Joseph Sieyes coined the term.

Nishida Kitaro

Why is Nishida Kitaro a prominent figure in Japan's history?

Nishida Kitaro founded the Kyoto School of Philosophy. He was the first philosopher to apply Western philosophical methods to Zen Buddhism and other Eastern beliefs and ideas.

Born in Japan in 1870, he wrote 'An Inquiry into the Good' in 1905. 'The Logic of the Place of Nothingness and the Religious Worldview' appeared in 1945. Nishida Kitaro died in the same year.

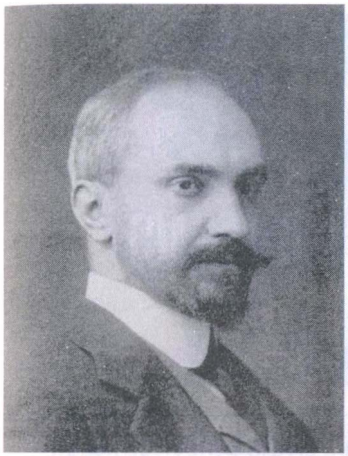
What made George Santayana a key philosopher?

Born in Spain, George Santayana grew up in the US, and became a world famous philosopher.

He was born in 1863. He lived in the US from the age of nine and wrote all his works in English. Santayana studied at Harvard with Peirce and William James. He was

William James and Psychology

William James was the first educator to offer a psychology course in the United States.



George Santayana

greatly influenced by these philosophers. He taught at the same university between 1888 and 1912.

He wrote 'The Sense of Beauty,'and 'The Life of Reason' while working at Harvard. 'Scepticism and Animal Faith' and 'The Realms of Being,' are his other works.

George Santayana died in 1952.

Why is Miguel de Unamuno an important figure in philosophy?

Miguel de Unamuno was a poet, playwright and philosopher.

Monument to Miguel de Unamuno

Miguel de Unamuno

He was born in Spain in 1864.

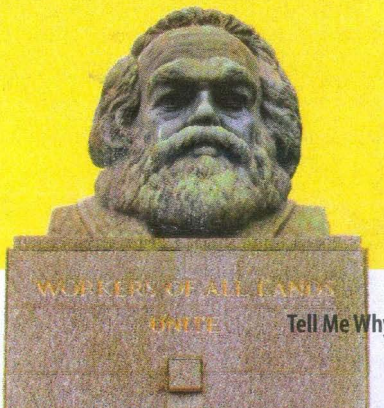
Unamuno opposed the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and was exiled from Spain from 1924 to 1930.

'The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho' and 'The True Sense of Life, ' are two of his books.

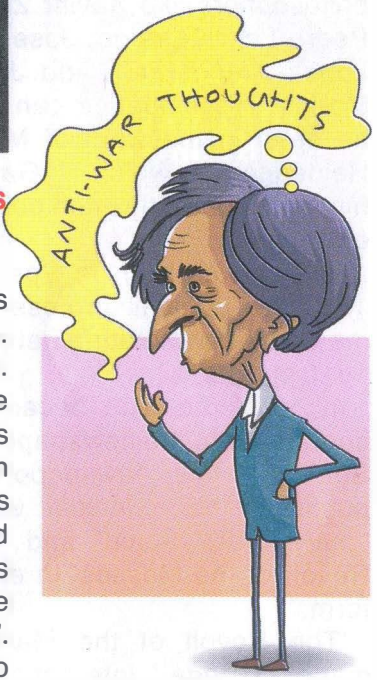
Unamuno's books describe his view of religious faith. Unamuno passed away in 1936.

Workers of all Lands, Unite.....

Marx died in London on March 14th, 1883. His original grave had only an ordinary stone as a marker. The tomb was too plain for the great Marx, and the Communist Party of Great Britain erected a large tombstone in 1954. The tombstone included a bust of Karl Marx. On the stone was etched the famous line of the Communist Manifesto, "Workers of all lands unite...."



Bertrand Russell



What were the major contributions of Bertrand Russell?

In 1919, Bertrand Russell was imprisoned for his antiwar activities. Russell spent five months in jail. Thirty one years later, in 1950, he won the Nobel Prize. Russell was born in an aristocratic family in England in 1872. He was a genius at both mathematics and philosophy. He teamed up with his teacher, A.N. Whitehead, in the writing of 'Principia Mathematica'. Russell wrote 'Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy'. He also attempted to reduce maths to logic. Russell was opposed to the Nazis. Russell's great book, 'History of Philosophy' is also his most widely read. Bertrand Russell passed away in 1970.

Why is Jose Ortega y Gasset remembered in history?

Jose Ortega was an influential Spanish philosopher.

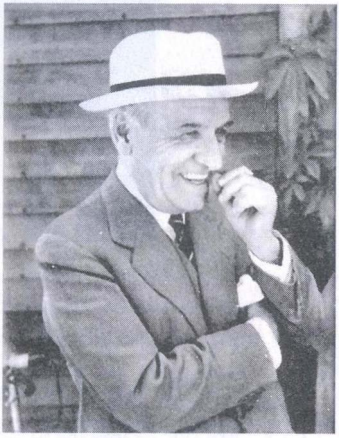
He strongly influenced later philosophers like Xavier Zubiri, Pedro Lain Entralgo, Jose Luis Lopez Aranguren, and Julian Marias. His influence can also be seen in the work of Martin Heidegger, which Gasset himself apparently often pointed out.

Ortega was born in Spain in 1883. He became professor of metaphysics at Madrid between 1910 and 1936.

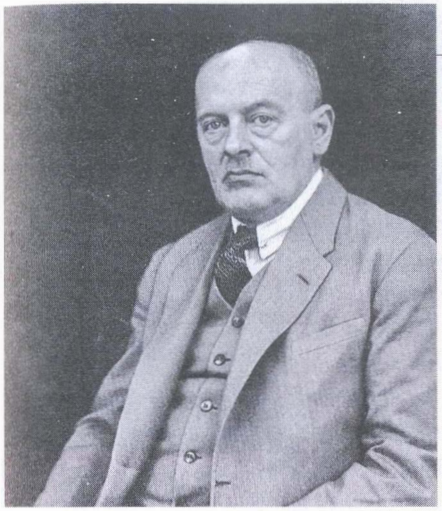
In 1917, he also became a contributor to the newspaper, El Sol. In this newspaper he published his principal works 'Invertebrate Spain' and 'The Revolt of the Masses' in essay form.

'The Revolt of the Masses' made Ortega internationally famous. The book opposed the celebration of values that characterizes the mass culture.

During the Civil War, he went into voluntary exile as he was a supporter of the Republic. His life came to an end in 1955.



Jose Ortega



What were the major contributions of Marx Scheler?

Marx Scheler was a major German philosopher. He was born in 1874. He began his teaching career at the University of Jena. There, he came under the influence of Husserl's philosophy. Husserl's philosophy was known as phenomenology. Scheler took the Chair in Philosophy and Sociology at Cologne after the end of World War I. He published his masterpiece, 'On the Eternal in Man'. 'Man's Place in Nature' and 'Formalism in Ethics' are his other important works. Scheler died in 1928.

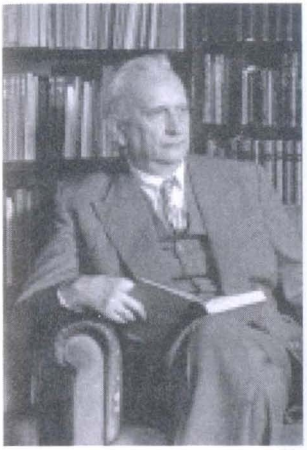
Vitalism

Ortega was an advocate of Vitalism. He argued that what is real is neither the self, nor the mind, nor the material world. Life alone is real.

Statue of Brandsma

Why is Titus Brandsma a prominent figure in the fight against Nazism?

Brandsma was a philosopher who was put to death for opposing the Nazis. Born in Holland in 1881, he became a monk of the Carmelite Order. Titus Brandsma received his doctorate in philosophy from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He taught at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. Though he gave many philosophical lectures, he is most remembered for his open opposition to Nazism. He was arrested by the Nazis in 1942, and sent to the Dachau concentration camp. Brandsma was executed there.



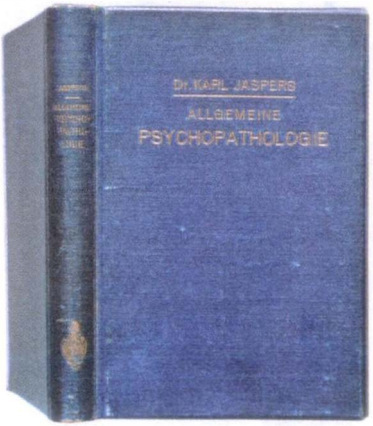
Karl Jaspers

Beatified Philosopher

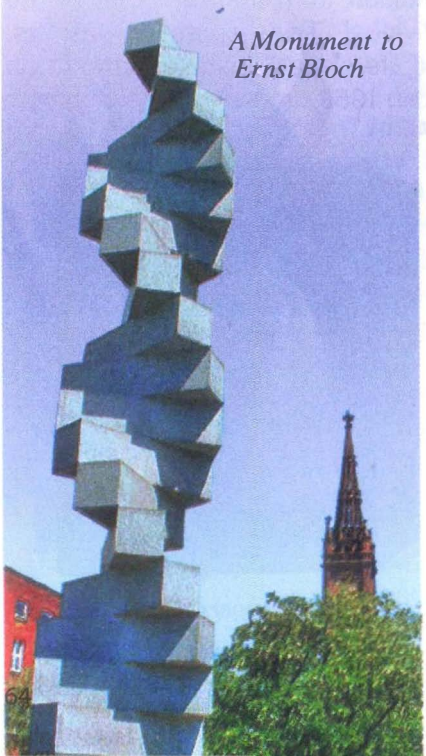
Brandsma was made a saint in 1985 by Pope John Paul II.

Why was Karl Jaspers different from his contemporaries?

Jaspers was a psychiatrist who became a philosopher. He was targeted by the Nazis. Jaspers became Professor of philosophy at Heidelberg, but he was removed from the post by the Nazis in 1937. He became Professor at Basel after the war. Karl Jaspers was born in Germany in 1883. Jaspers praised Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. These philosophers had explored the human condition from the viewpoint of the individual. This impressed Jaspers. The life of Karl Jaspers came to an end in 1969.



Karl Jaspers' Book



A Monument to Ernst Bloch

Ernst Bloch

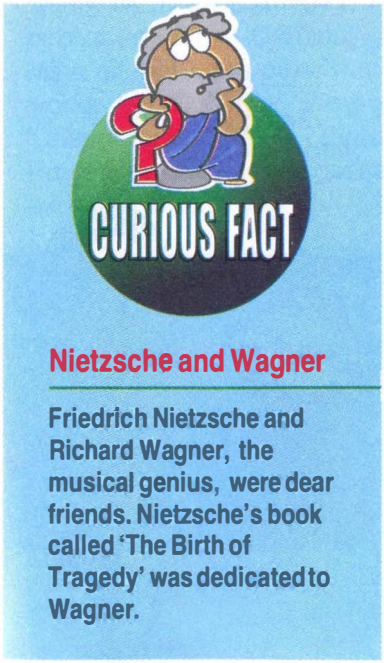
Why is Ernst Bloch regarded as a major Marxist philosopher?

Ernst Bloch, the Marxist philosopher, believed that a world free from exploitation was possible.

Karl Marx said that religion is the opium of the people. Bloch did not completely agree with Marx on this point. He gave religion a place in his philosophy. He was social reformer, too.

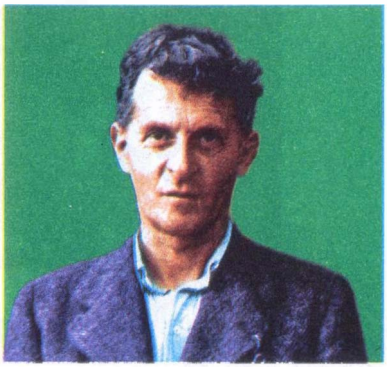
Bloch was born in Germany in 1885. In 1918, he wrote 'The Spirit of Utopia'. He went to the United States in 1933. There, he began working on his masterpiece, 'The Principle of Hope' (1954-59). Bloch taught in Leipzig after World War II.

However, the building of the Berlin Wall forced him to take refuge in West Germany. Bloch died in 1977.



Nietzsche and Wagner

Friedrich Nietzsche and Richard Wagner, the musical genius, were dear friends. Nietzsche's book called 'The Birth of Tragedy' was dedicated to Wagner.



Ludwig Wittgenstein

Why is Ludwig Wittgenstein a celebrated figure in Austria?

Ludwig Wittgenstein was a philosopher who joined the army. He did not let the war stop his philosophical work. Wittgenstein was born in a prosperous Austrian family in 1889. He joined the Austro-Hungarian army. He was influenced by Russell, and continued his philosophical work during the war. In 1922 he published 'The Tractatus' in English. In 1929, he continued his philosophical research at Cambridge. He became professor in 1939. Wittgenstein passed away in 1951.

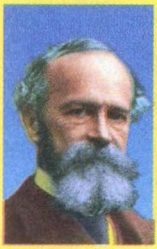
Heidegger

Why was the great philosopher Martin Heidegger banned from teaching?

Martin Heidegger was attracted by the philosophy of Nazism. He joined the Nazi Party in 1933. The Nazis lost World War II. After the war, Heidegger was banned from teaching, because of his association with the Nazis. Heidegger was born in Germany in 1899. In 1915, he became a lecturer in Freiburg. Edmund Husserl was a major influence on Heidegger. Heidegger wrote 'Being and Time'. This publication won him the Chair at Marburg. Martin Heidegger died in 1976.

The James Brothers

William James was the brother of the famous novelist Henry James.



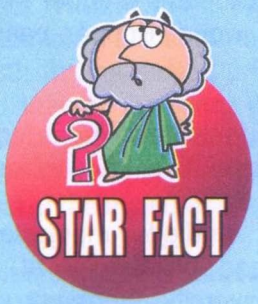
William

Henry

What were the major contributions of Gilbert Ryle?

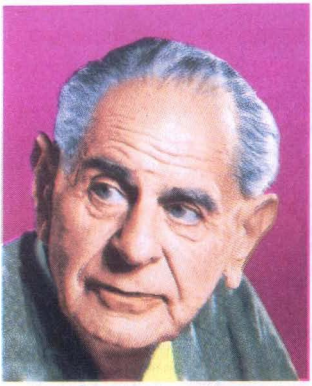
Gilbert Ryle was the Professor of metaphysical philosophy at Oxford. He had been a student at the very same university.

Ryle, an English philosopher, was born in 1900. Initially, Ryle was influenced by phenomenology, the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Ryle also edited the prestigious journal 'Mind,' from 1948 to 1971. He published 'The Concept of Mind' in 1949. His other major works are 'Collected Papers', 'Dilemmas' and 'Plato's Progress'. Gilbert Ryle passed away in 1976.

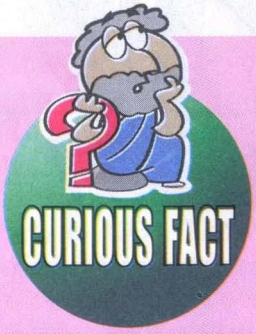


Interpretation

Hans-Georg Gadamer was born in Germany in 1900. He was famous for his theory of interpretation. According to this theory, the interpretation of a text does not require an objective understanding of the author's intentions. "Truth and Method" was his masterpiece. It was published in 1960. Hans-Georg Gadamer passed away in 2002.



Karl Raimund Popper



Gilbert Ryle

"A person who has a good nose for arguments or jokes may have a bad head for facts."
-Gilbert Ryle
(The Concept of Mind)

Why is Karl Raimund Popper different from his contemporaries?

Popper was a famous philosopher of science. 'The Logic of Scientific Discovery' is his first work. His views on scientific method are found in this book.

Popper was born to a Jewish family in 1902, in his motherland, Austria. The rise of the Nazis forced Popper to leave Austria, and settle in New Zealand. During the war years, he wrote 'The Open Society and Its Enemies'. Following the end of the war, he taught in the London School of Economics. 'The Poverty of Historicism', 'Conjectures and Refutations', and 'The Self and its Brain' are the other major works of Karl Raimund Popper.

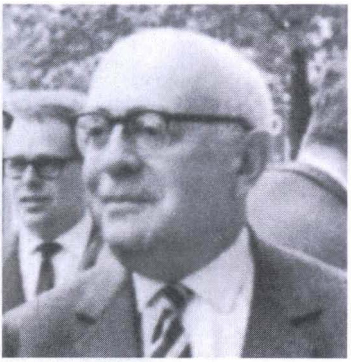
Popper was also known for his critiques of utopian political philosophy. Utopia is another name for an ideal world. Popper passed away in 1994.

Why is Theodor Adorno regarded as a key figure in the Frankfurt school?

Adorno studied musicology, sociology, and philosophy at the Frankfurt University. Germany was his homeland.

Adorno was born in 1903. In 1925, Adorno shifted to Vienna. His friend Max Horkheimer was teaching in the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research. Adorno returned to Frankfurt to teach under Horkheimer. The Nazis cancelled his license to teach in 1933. So, he moved to England, and then to America. When the war came to an end, he returned to Frankfurt, and became the head of the Institute.

Theodor Adorno became prominent in the Frankfurt School with Horkheimer and Marcuse. He died in 1969.



Theodor Adorno

Think and Write

J.W. von Goethe, was a famous writer and thinker. He was born in Germany in 1749. He is often remembered as being more of a literary great than a philosopher, but in reality, he was both, and more. He is associated with Romanticism, a movement that put a greater emphasis on feeling, in reaction, to the over-emphasis on reason, which was common during the Enlightenment. His masterpiece is 'Faust' and he died in 1832.

Jean Paul Sartre

Why is Jean - Paul Sartre regarded as one of the greatest among the post war philosophers?

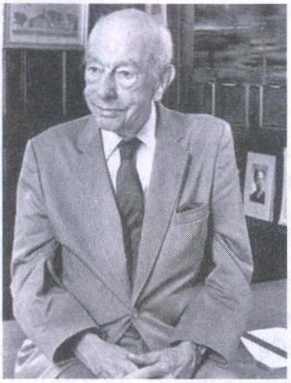
Jean Paul Sartre, who was born in France in 1905, was a great philosopher who turned down the Nobel Prize.

Sartre became the greatest spokesman of existentialism in the post war years. Sartre taught that human freedom is total. He studied philosophy at the Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris. There, he met Simone de Beauvoir who became his lifelong companion. In 1945, he gave the lecture 'Existentialism is a Humanism'. This lecture together with his various works for theatre made Sartre famous.

In 1964 he turned down the Nobel Prize for Literature. He wrote a study of the French author Gustave Flaubert, titled 'The Idiot of the Family', in 1972. Jean Paul Sartre died in 1980.

Simone de Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir was one of the finest feminist philosophers of the twentieth century. Simone de Beauvoir was a novelist as well. She was born in France in 1908. She had a lifelong friendship with the great philosopher Jean Paul Sartre. Simone de Beauvoir died in 1986.



Willard Van Quine

What made Willard Van Orman Quine, the most prominent among the American philosophers?

Willard Quine was a famous philosopher who worked as a naval intelligence officer. Born in America in 1908, Quine studied mathematics and philosophy. He journeyed to Europe, and met Rudolf Carnap, the German born philosopher.

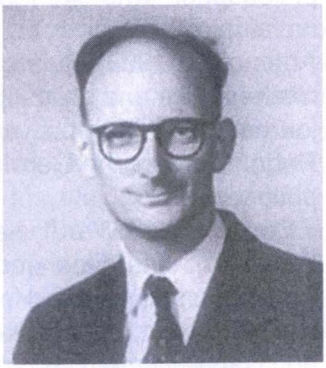
During World War II, he joined the navy. Quine influenced Anglo-American philosophy. He taught Hilary Putnam, Donald Davidson, and Daniel Dennett and other key Anglo-American philosophers. Quine died in 2000.

Why is John Langshaw Austin regarded as an Oxford philosopher?

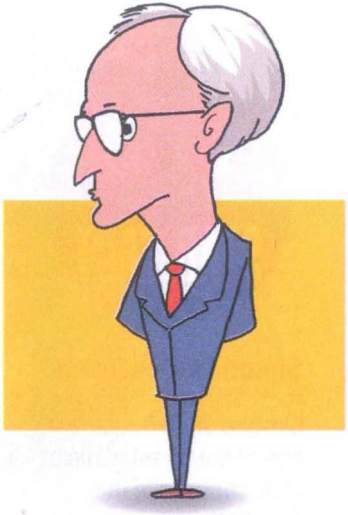
John Langshaw Austin, born in England in 1911, studied in Oxford, taught in Oxford, and was the key figure in 'Oxford Philosophy'.

Thisphilosophywasfashionable in the 1950s. He spent his entire teaching life at Oxford. As a writer, he was interesting and often amusing too. Austin died in 1960.

After his death, his collections of papers and lectures were collected and published as 'Sense and Sensibilia' and 'How to do Things with Words'. Austin is best known through these writings.

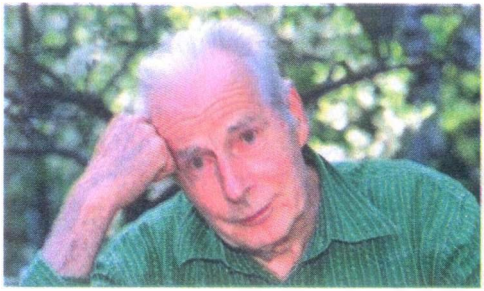


John Langshaw Austin



Utopia

The word 'Utopia' depicts a community or society possessing highly desirable, or near perfect qualities. This word was coined by Sir Thomas More for his book 'Utopia,' which was published in 1516. The book describes a fictional island society in the Atlantic Ocean. The term has now been used to describe communities that attempt to create an ideal society.



Arne Naess

What is Arne Naess famous for?

Arne Naess of Norway is famous for his ecosophy. Ecosophy is the philosophy of living wisely within our home. Home means the whole of nature, in this philosophy.

The word Ecosophy came from the Greek for 'household' and 'wisdom'. He believed in the Gandhian ethics of solidarity, not just with our fellow beings, but with the entire living environment.

Naess was born in 1912 and he is the founding father of the 'Deep Ecology movement'.

According to the 'Deep Ecology movement', other species have equal importance as human beings.

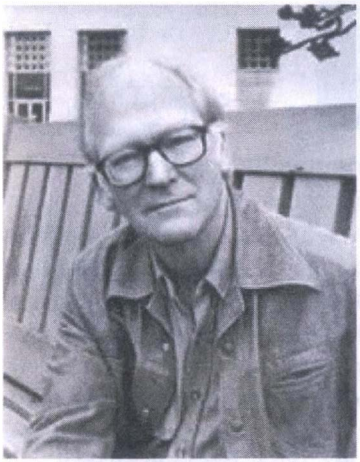
He was an activist and successfully opposed plans to build a dam by chaining himself, to rocks at Mardals-fossen waterfall in 1970. Arnes Naess died in 2009.

Family Matters

Bertrand Russell belonged to a powerful family of Great Britain. The Russell family had been prominent in England for several centuries.

● *Dev Nath*

Why is Donald Davidson different from his contemporaries?

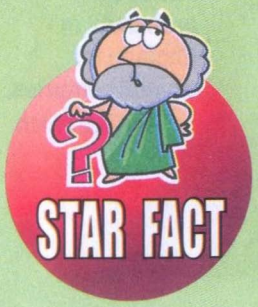


Donald Davidson

Donald Davidson is a major philosopher who did not produce a major book. He wrote many brilliantly reasoned, but short articles.

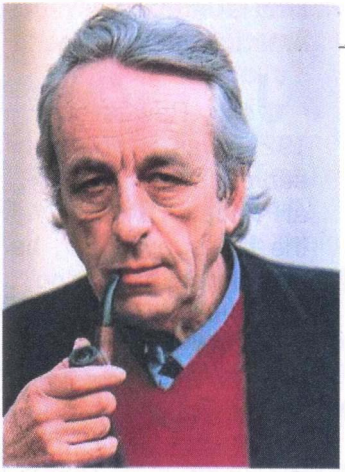
These articles gained him fame. Along with the Polish logician Tarski, he argued that a language must have a finite, or limited number of elements. The meaning of sentences must be a product of these elements, used according to the rules of combination.

Donald Davidson was born in America in 1917. He studied at Harvard under Quine. Davidson died in 2003.



Nishida Kitaro and the Kyoto School

The Kyoto School was a Japanese philosophical movement centered at the Kyoto University. This school of philosophy absorbed western philosophy and religious ideas, and used these to give fresh insights to East Asian religious and moral ideas.



Why is Louis Althusser known as a Marx scholar?

Althusser was a Marx scholar and a communist philosopher.

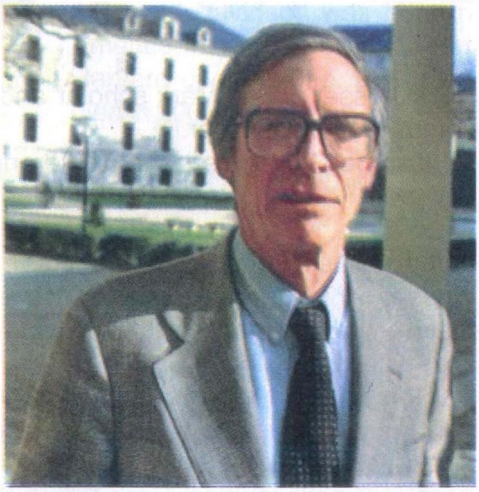
He argued that there is sharp difference between the two phases of Marx's writings. Early Marx focused on the ideas of the philosopher, Hegel. It reflects the times in which Marx lived. His later and mature work is in the 'scientific' period of 'Das Kapital'.

In this phase, history is seen as having its intentions and also as acting through human-agents. Althusser became an important philosophical force within the French Communist Party. Althuser lived from 1918 to 1990.

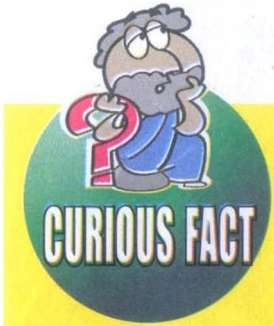
Why is John Rawls regarded as a great American philosopher?

John Rawls, born in America in 1921, was a great philosopher who served in the US army. Rawls studied at Princeton University. Then, he joined the US army. Later, he left the army and turned to teaching.

Rawls held several lecturing positions. Finally, he settled in Harvard in 1962. Rawls continued in Harvard till his death in 2002. 'Theory of Justice', 'Political Liberalism' and 'The Law of Peoples,' are the major works of Rawls.



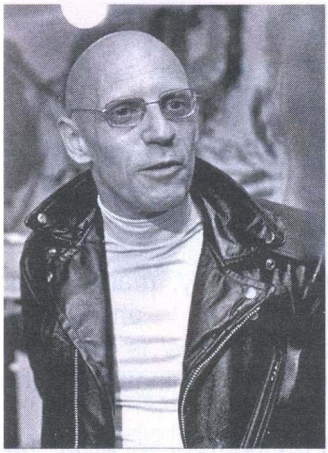
John Rawls



Kuhn Question

Traditionally, scientific progress is regarded as the gradual addition to knowledge. Thomas S. Kuhn questioned this view in 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions'. Kuhn was born in America in 1922. Initially he was trained as a physicist. He passed away in 1996.

● *Vestin Varghese*



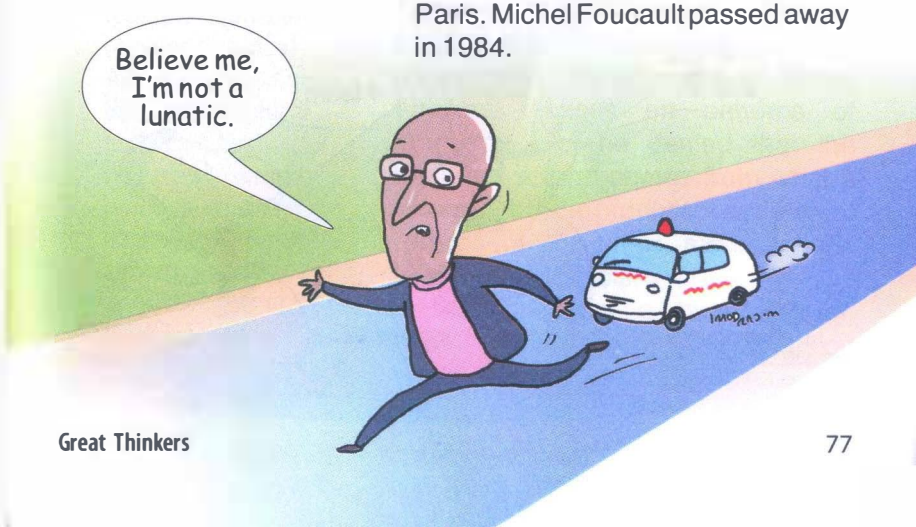
Michel Foucault

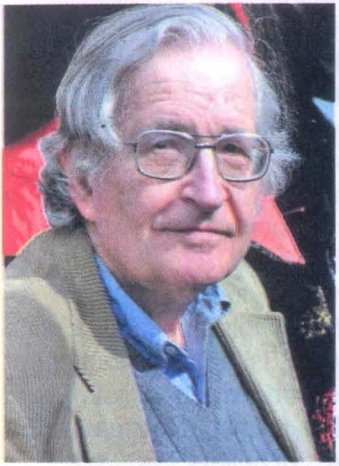
Why is Michel Foucault a prominent philosopher in the modern century?

'Madness and Civilization' is the first major work of Michel Foucault.

The origins of the lunatic asylum, a home for the mad, are described in this book. The book also outlines the history of European attitudes to madness. Focault also wrote 'The Order of Things'. He tries to find out about the current forms of knowledge in this book. 'Discipline and Punish' is an important later work. His works merges history and philosophy as he investigates the complexes of beliefs.

Foucault was born in 1926, in France. He trained as a philosopher at the Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris. Michel Foucault passed away in 1984.





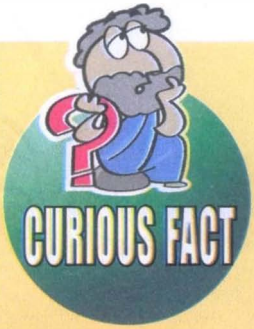
Noam Chomsky

What were the major contributions of Noam Chomsky?

Noam Chomsky, made major contributions to philosophy. 'Syntactic Strucutres' is his great work. It is based on linguistics, the study of language.

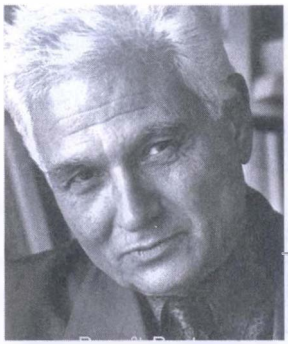
In 1955, Chomsky received his PhD in linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania. He then taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Chomsky produced detailed critiques of Western governments' policies.

Noam Chomsky is well known as a political activist throughout the world.



Peirce and Pragmatism

Peirce was a philosopher who founded 'Pragmatism'. This American philosophical tradition began around 1870. It had been widely regarded that the function of thought was to describe, represent, or mirror reality. Pragmatism rejected this idea. According to Pragmatists, philosophical topics are best regarded in terms of practical uses and successes. The representative accuracy of philosophical topics is secondary.



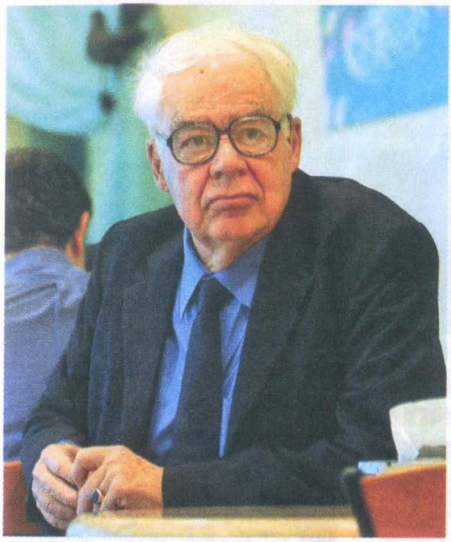
Jacques Derrida

Why is it said that Jacques Derrida's work had a significant impact on the modern world?

Jacques Derrida developed a technique called deconstruction. It involved a careful reading of texts to understand the flow of meaning.

Jacques Derrida a Frenchman, was born in 1930. Derrida studied at the Ecole Normale Superieure under Foucault and Althusser. Later, he taught there. He was influenced by the structuralist view of meaning. Structuralism focuses on patterns of language. So, he denied that the sense of a term comes from what it refers to. It is the product of its different relations with other terms in the language as a whole.

His work had a huge impact, especially on the English speaking world. Derrida died in 2004.

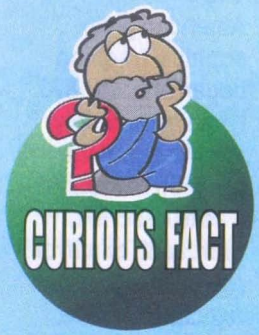


Richard Rorty

Why is Richard Rorty different from his contemporaries?

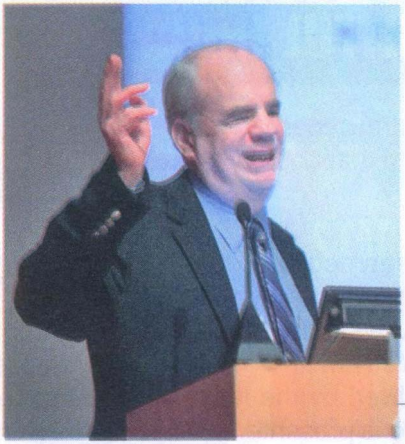
Richard Rorty wrote 'Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature'. This was his major work. Rorty was a famous American thinker. He was born in 1931, and studied at Chicago and Yale.

Later, he became professor at Stanford University, California. He was influenced by Quine, but he comes under the group of post modern philosophers. Rorty lived into his seventies, and died in 2007.



Jean Paul Sartre

As a young man, Sartre read Henri Bergson's essay 'Time and Free Will'. The book sparked Sartre's interest in philosophy.



Saul Kripke

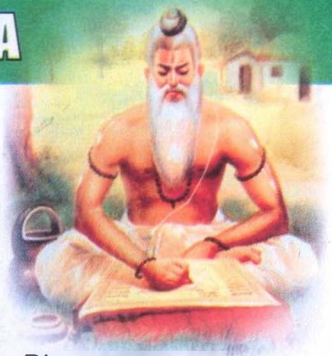
Why is Saul Kripke prominent among the living philosophers?

At the age of nineteen Saul Kripke published his first paper on philosophy.

Kripke was born in America in 1940. His first paper was on modal logic. Modal logic is the study of philosophical ideas such as necessity and possibility. He published several papers on this topic. The idea that a necessary truth is one that is true in all possible worlds attracted Kripke. Leibniz, the philosopher was the originator of this idea. Kripke took up this idea, and developed a new topic of research called 'possible world' semantics.

Semantics is the study of meanings in a language. 'Naming and Necessity,' and 'Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language' are among the important books of Kripke. Saul Kripke is a prominent living philosopher.

INSIGHTFUL INDIA



Why is Manusmriti regarded as one of the greatest accounts on legal philosophy?

Manu is regarded as the oldest lawmaker in the world. Manusmriti or 'Laws of Manu,' is the earliest work on law.

Ancient India lived by the laws of Manu. The text is presented as a long talk given by Manu, the father of mankind, to a group of sages.

According to Hindu tradition, Manu records the words of Brahma. Manusmriti is regarded as a standard work. It became a point of reference for all future dharmasatras that followed it.

Dharmasastras are ancient Indian religious and legal treatises. Sir William Jones translated the Manusmriti into English in 1794.

What were the major contributions of Yajnavalkya to the Indian philosophy?

Yajnavalkya of Mithila was a legendary sage of

Mahavira

Mahavira, also known as Vardhamana, was the twenty-fourth, and last tirthankara of Jainism. He was born into a royal family in Bihar, India. At the age of 30, he left his home in pursuit of spiritual awakening or Diksha. He travelled all over India for the next 30 years to teach his philosophy which is based on ahimsa, satya, and brahmacharya. Mahavira attained nirvana after his physical death at the age of 72.

Vedic India. This outstanding philosopher is regarded as the author of 'Shatapatha Brahmana' (including the 'Brihadaranyaka Upanishad'), the 'Yoga Yajnavalkya' and the 'Yajnavalkya Smriti'. Yajnavalkya was one of the great figures of the Upanishads too.

Yajnavalkya

Arthashastra

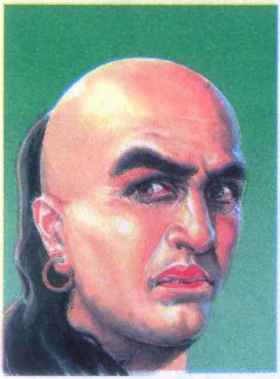
Chanakya's 'Arthashastra' is a classic manual on statecraft - the way to run a state. The 'Arthashathra' is clear and precise. It is not merely a theoretical text, but a practical description of the right method to rule a state. The 'Arthashasthra' originated as a result of practical experience in running a state.

Why is Chanakya considered as one of the most prominent among the Indian philosophers?

Chanakya stage managed the young Chandragupta Maurya's rise to power. Chandragupta Maurya became the first Mauryan Emperor.

Chanakya was a brilliant Indian philosopher, teacher and royal advisor. He was also known as Kautilya. He lived from 370-283 BC. He was originally a professor of economics and political science at the ancient Takshashila University.

Chanakya wrote the ancient political treatise, the 'Arthashasthra'. He was a pioneer, or developer of new ideas, of economics and political science in India. Chanakya's work is regarded as an important forerunner of classical economics.



Chanakya

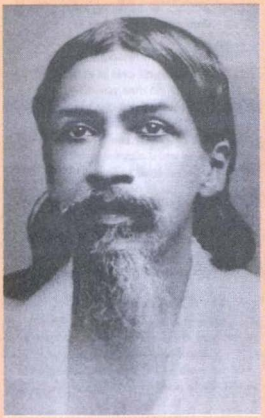
Sankaracharya

Why is Sankaracharya regarded as a great Indian philosopher?

Adi Shankara was a great philosopher who hailed from Kaladi in Kerala. His travels took him from the southern tip of India to the Himalayas.

He was born in the 8th century BC. Adi Shankara is the founder of the Shanmata tradition of worship. His works in Sanskrit established the doctrine of 'Advaita'.

He wrote commentaries on the Upanishads. His other important works are 'Manisha Panchakam' and 'Prakarana Granthas'.



Sri Aurobindo

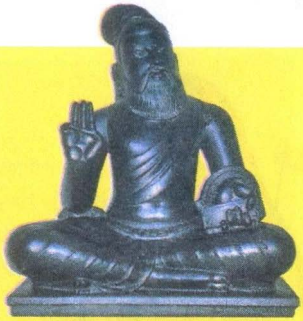
Sri Aurobindo, was an Indian nationalist, philosopher and poet. He was born in Bengal in 1872. He joined India's Freedom Movement and became one of its leaders, and then became a spiritual reformer. The American philosopher Ken Wilber has called Aurobindo "India's greatest modern philosopher sage". Aurobindo's main works are 'The Life Divine', 'Synthesis of Yoga,' and 'Savitri', an epic poem. His works also include commentaries on the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. Aurobindo died in 1950.

Why is Tiruvalluvar a renowned social philosopher?

Thiruvalluvar was a celebrated poet-philosopher. 'Thirukkural' was his great contribution to Tamil literature. This is a masterful work on ethics, which is read even today.

Thiruvalluvar was born in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. He is believed to have lived between the first century BC and the eighth century AD. This estimate is based on the linguistic study of his writings. No archaeological evidence exists to estimate the time period in which he lived.

Thiruvalluvar is also known as Theiva Pulavar ('Divine Poet'), Valluvar, Poyyamozhi Pulavar, or Ayyan.

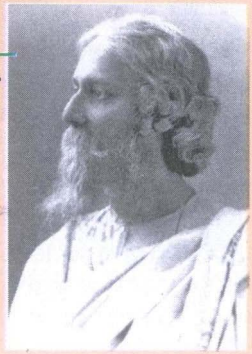


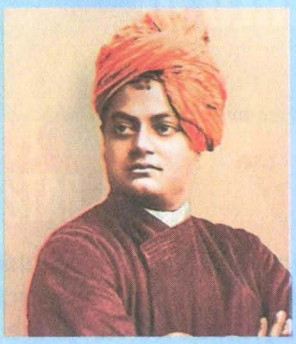
Thirukkural

Thirukkural is one of the most ancient works in the Tamil language. Considered a 'common creed', it is a timeless guide of moral standards and self improvement. Thirukkural has been translated into several languages.

A Sage from Bengal

Rabindranath Tagore was, the most popular among the modern Indian philosophers. He was born in Bengal in 1861. He became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his work 'Gitanjali'. His works were remarkable, with its deep spiritual and philosophical nature. He was highly influential in introducing the best of Indian culture to the West.





The Light of India

Swami Vivekananda was born in Bengal in 1863. His earlier name was Narendra Nath Datta. He was the chief disciple of the 19th century philosopher, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. He was a key figure in the introduction of Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world and is credited with raising interfaith awareness. He is perhaps best known for his inspiring speech which began, "Sisters and brothers of America ...," at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893. Swami Vivekananda passed away in 1902.

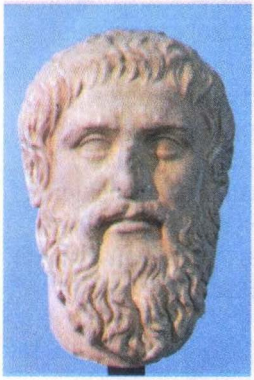
A World Citizen

Jiddu Krishnamurti, who was born in 1895, in Madanapalle, was a speaker and writer on philosophical and spiritual subjects. His subject matter included psychological revolution and bringing about radical change in society. He wrote many books, including 'The First and Last Freedom' and 'The Only Revolution'. He died in 1986.

Charvaka, the Atheists

Charvaka is a system of Indian philosophy. It is characterized as a materialistic and atheistic school of thought. The basic tenet of Charvaka philosophy is that there is no soul .

THE WORLD OF VISION



Plato

What is the significance of 'Metaphysics'?

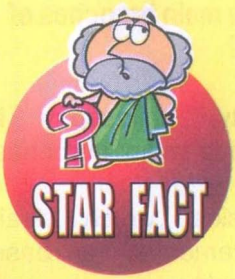
Metaphysics is concerned with things that do not change. Metaphysics searches for standards by which we can judge the reality of material objects, mental states, relations, and the like. This branch of Metaphysics is known as Ontology. Cosmology is another branch of Metaphysics. Cosmology interprets the findings of physics and astronomy. Was the world created by God or did it evolve by chance? Is the world finite or infinite in space and time? Cosmology attempts to answer these questions.

Plato is regarded as the greatest of the metaphysical philosophers. Pythagoras and Heraclitus are also considered to be major metaphysicians.

Piano and Philosophy

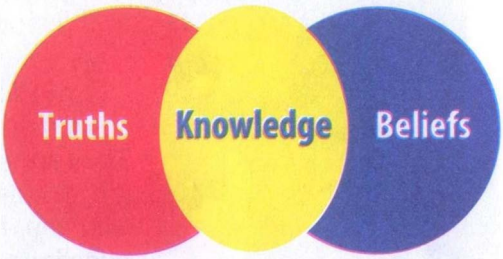
Davidson taught the philosophy of music at Stanford. Davidson was a pianist who always had an interest in music. At Harvard, he was in the same class as the conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein. Davidson played the piano with Bernstein.

Sneha Rao



Immortal Papers

J. L. Austin's papers were collected and published after his death under the title 'Philosophical Papers,' by J.O. Urmson and Geoffrey Warnock.



What is Epistemology?

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the problems of defining knowledge, truth, logic, and perception. It investigates the ways in which we gain knowledge.

The word 'Epistemology' is derived from the Greek language. 'Episteme' means knowledge, and 'logos,' means word or speech.

Francis Bacon, St. Thomas Aquinas and Noam Chomsky are the important Epistemologists.

Young Professor

Naess was the youngest person to be appointed full professor at the University of Oslo. At the time, Naess was the only professor of philosophy in the whole of Norway.

Statue of Diogenes

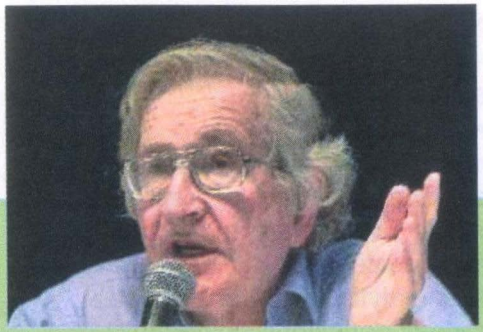
What are the main branches of philosophy?

Traditionally, philosophy is divided into five main branches. They are:

- Metaphysics, which deals with the fundamental, or basic questions of reality.
- Epistemology, which deals with our concept or idea of knowledge, how we learn, and what we can know.
- Logic, which studies the rules of valid, or true reasoning and argumentation.
- Ethics, or moral philosophy, which is concerned with human values, and how individuals should act.
- Aesthetics or esthetics, which deals with the notion or idea of beauty, and the philosophy of art.

Nietzsche and Foucault

Michel Foucault came under the influence of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, in the early 1950s. Nietzsche was the core, lifelong influence on Foucault's work.



Write, Wrote, Written

Noam Chomsky is a literary giant. He wrote more than hundred books on many important subjects.

What are the major ideas behind Ethics and Aesthetics?

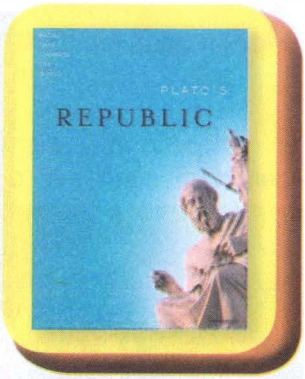
Ethics and Aesthetics are two branches of philosophy. Ethics is the study of the 'science of morality'. Behaviour which is 'good' or 'right' is regarded as ethical behaviour in philosophy. The Western tradition of ethics is sometimes called moral philosophy. Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy concerned with the definition of art and beauty. This branch of philosophy also aims at discovering general standards for art criticism. Plato, Aristotle and John Stuart Mill were major ethical philosophers while Theodor Adorno, Michel Foucault, and Friedrich Nietzsche were great aestheticians.

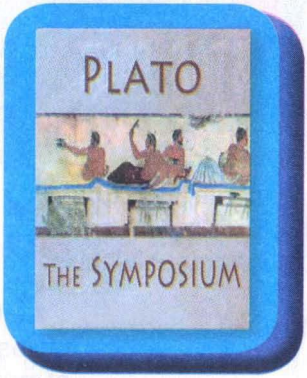
What are the two classifications of philosophy according to the methods of reasoning?

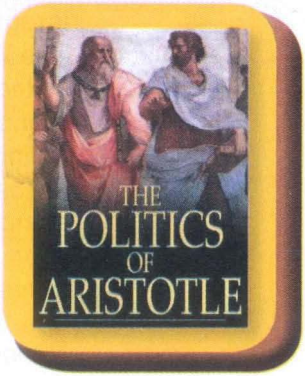
The two main methods of reasoning in philosophy are the Analytic method and the Synthetic method.

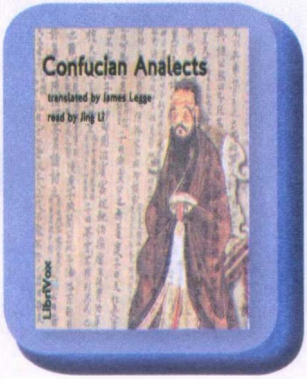
The Analytic method searches for clear definitions of central ideas like virtue, justice, and knowledge. The Synthetic method focuses on organizing all the fields of human knowledge to obtain a unified view of nature and man.

Socrates was the major advocate of the Analytical method. Plato and Aristotle were the proponents of the synthetic method.





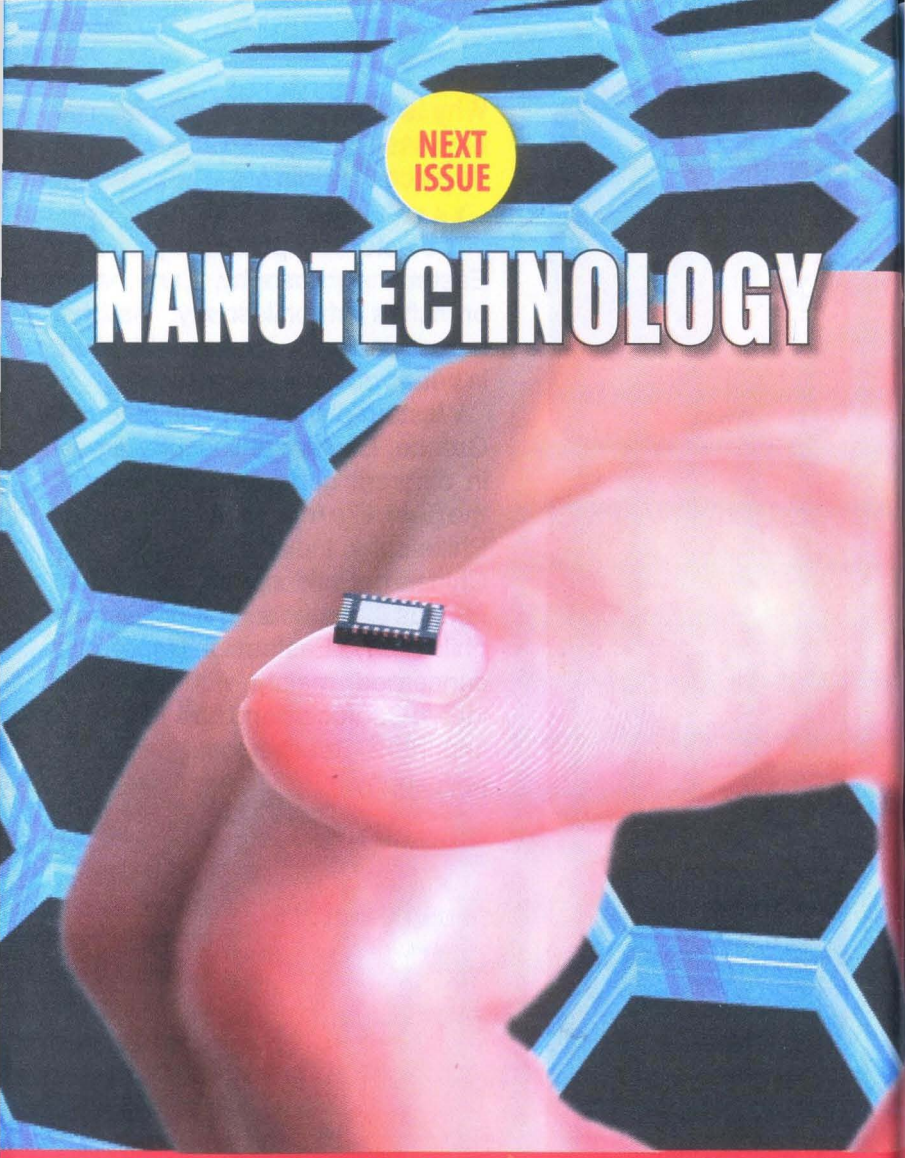




Why is it said that Philosophy can be classified into two according to its place of origin?

Western philosophy and Eastern philosophy are two branches of philosophy. As the names indicate, this classification is based on the place of origin.

Western philosophy originated in Greece. Eastern philosophy arose in different geographical areas in the East, like India and China. Arab Philosophy, Indian Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy are some famous schools of Eastern philosophy. Eastern philosophy is concerned mainly with religious ideas. Confucius and Lao Tzu were important teachers of Eastern philosophy.



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Clarifications & Corrections

Utpal Rai a student from Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, points out a correction to the May issue of Tell Me Why 'Explorations That Changed The World'.

Utpal refers to pages 76-77, where it was mentioned that John Ross discovered the magnetic north pole. Actually, it was James Clark Ross who discovered it.

Thank you Utpal for your valuable feedback
- Editor

WINNERS

Winners of the GK Contest - 11, Prime Ministers- held in the April issue of Tell Me Why.

1. Aditya Arun
A-6, Flat No: S-4,
Kurtarkar Classic, Aquem, Margao, Goa.

2. Devavrathan A.
Shreyas, Kanchikatta Road,
Kumbla, Kasaragod, Kerala.

3. Siddharth Singh
Flat No: 714, Phase 1, Vijaya Gardens,
Baridih, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand.

4. Ritesh Das
16, Sashan Kalitala Road,
Swarna Valley Apartment,
Flat No: A-1, 3rd Floor, Block-II,
Kolkata, West Bengal

5. Alisha Jayawant
2004, Royale, Ashar Residency,
Glady's Alwares Road,
Thane (West), Maharashtra.

GK Contest - 11 Prime Ministers - ANSWERS

1. Jawaharlal Nehru 2. Lal Bahadur Sastri 3. Morarji Desai
4. Indira Gandhi 5. Rajiv Gandhi 6. Viswanath Pratap Singh
7. Narasimha Rao 8. Atal Bihari Vajpayee 9. Manmohan Singh

GAMES

Here's a contest for our readers. Identify the GAMES, from the photos given here.

All you need to do is send us an email naming each GAME with the proper number.

(PLEASE GIVE YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS ALSO IN THE E-MAIL) You are also welcome to send your answers by post.

Five winners will be awarded prizes. In case there are more than five correct entries, the winners will be chosen by lot.

Last Date to receive entries:

2014 JUNE 25th

Our e-mail address:

childrensdivision@mmp.in

Please enter

TMW - GK CONTEST - 13

in the subject line of your email.

FOR FIVE LUCKY WINNERS

MICRO ROBOT

If you are sending your entry by post, superscribe this on your envelope.

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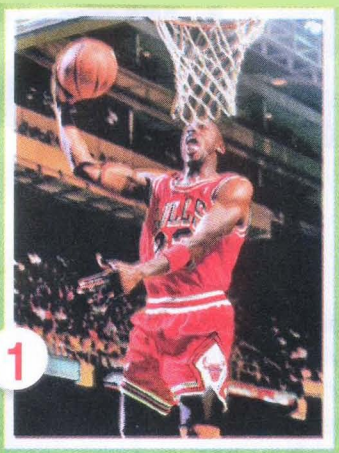
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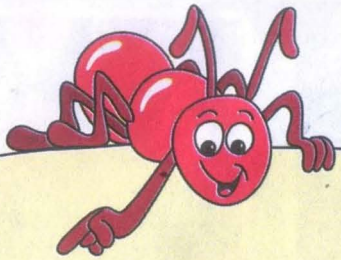
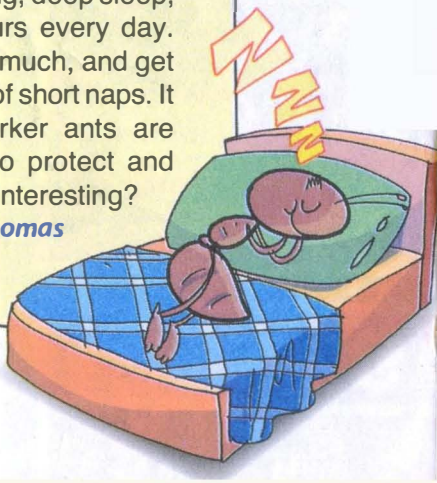
I Wonder Why?



Question of the Month

Do ants sleep?

Yes, they do. But their sleeping pattern is different from that of other living beings. They take short naps at different intervals, instead of having continuous hours of sleep. As you know, an ant colony has both worker ants and queen ants. Queen ants fall into a relatively long, deep sleep, averaging about nine hours every day. Workers sleep just half as much, and get to rest by taking hundreds of short naps. It ensures that enough worker ants are awake at any one time to protect and serve the colony. Isn't that interesting?

● *Indhu Thomas*